Teotihuacan and the Development of Writing in Early Classic Central Mexico

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As in the case of the writing systems of the ancient Maya and Zapotec, a considerable amount is known about Aztec writing.[1] In many postconquest manuscripts of the sixteenth century, as well as in a number of prehispanic stone monuments, a great many signs can be identified or read, including numbers, calendrics, toponyms, and the names of historical figures. In addition, we now recognize the presence of syllabic signs and the frequent use of phonetic complements with logograms and logograms as rebus (for recent discussion, see Lacadena 2008; Zender 2008). However, the origins of this important writing system remain poorly understood, in large part because of the surprising lack of study of earlier central Mexican texts, including the Early Postclassic writing of Tula and the Epiclassic scripts of Cacaxtla, Teotenango, and Xochicalco.[2] In one of the few studies devoted to Epiclassic central Mexican writing, Janet Berlo (1989:44) suggests that this writing tradition began at Teotihuacan: "Starting at Teotihuacan and continuing at such sites as Cacaxtla and Xochicalco, the compounding of pictorial graphemes in building block fashion foreshadows the structure and practice of glyph formation by the Aztecs." Similarly, Alfonso Lacadena (2008:16) notes that the highly conservative Nahuatl writing of the Aztec must have its roots at Early Classic Teotihuacan, "the ultimate source of the physiognomy which the writings of all of western Mesoamerica would come to manifest for more than fifteen centuries."

At the onset, I must note that before Teotihuacan there is no evidence of related writing in central Mexico, including at such sites as Cuicuilco, Tlapacoya, and Cholula. As in the case of the remarkable iconography of Teotihuacan, its writing tradition seems to originate virtually ex nihilo, with no obvious relation to other earlier writing traditions of Mesoamerica. However, even at the beginning of its florescence, Teotihuacan was in strong contact with other cultures of Mesoamerica, including the early Zapotec and Maya. Late Preclassic Chicanel pottery from the Maya Lowlands is present

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in the interior of fill of the Pyramid of the Sun, and one of the first demonstrations of Teotihuacan iconography is on the Temple of Quetzalcoatl, a structure that dates to the mid-third century AD and that portrays a massive serpent covered with quetzal plumes, a bird of decidedly Maya origin. In addition, many aspects of Teotihuacan writing, including certain day name glyphs and the form and placement of coefficients, probably derived from the early Zapotec. But although Teotihuacan clearly was influenced throughout its history by other cultures of Mesoamerica, it also exerted a strong presence in distant regions. Somewhat ironically, some of the most striking examples of Teotihuacan writing in monumental inscriptions are at distant sites, such as Tepecuacuilco, Guerrero, Piedra Labrada, Veracruz, Los Horcones, Chiapas, and Tikal, Guatemala. The Classic Zapotec and the Maya also incorporated Teotihuacan conventions at times in their own scripts, providing clues as to how roughly contemporaneous cultures viewed some of the essential conventions of Teotihuacan writing.

As in previous studies devoted to Teotihuacan writing, I will address the topic of Teotihuacan calendrics and day signs, especially in terms of new additions to the still notably small corpus of dates known for Teotihuacan and their relation to day glyphs from other cultures of highland Mexico. In addition to texts pertaining to the 260-day calendar, Teotihuacan writing also contains references to proper nouns, these being toponyms and personal names whose forms resemble conventions known for later writing systems of central Mexico, including that of the Aztec and sixteenth-century Nahuatl texts. Another Teotihuacan trait shared with early colonial Nahuatl documents is the placement of human figures and glyphic signs in grids, which is in striking contrast to texts known for the roughly contemporaneous Classic Zapotec and Maya. Just as Teotihuacan imagery appears in such distant regions as Guerrero, Oaxaca, and the southern piedmont and Peten regions of Guatemala, so too does Teotihuacan writing. In this paper I will discuss some of the meanings of these foreign signs, many of which are based on militaristic themes, a trait that can also be noted for many Early Classic monuments of Teotihuacan style outside of the heartland of the *cultura madre* of Postclassic central Mexico.

Teotihuacan Day Signs

The first scholar to systematically study Teotihuacan writing was Alfonso Caso (1937, 1959, 1966, 1967). Caso noticed that at Teotihuacan a number of signs appeared with bar-and-dot coefficients, which were already known from southeastern Mesoamerica, including the Zapotec, southern Veracruz, and Maya regions, and he readily recognized the glyphic elements appearing with these coefficients as day names. Caso (1966:Figures 2b, 42a) illustrated examples from an important but only recently published and exhibited *tecalli* plumed serpent bearing a series of day names on its body (Figure 5.1; see also Sugiyama and Cabrera Castro 2004:Cat. No. 151). As Caso (1966:275) noted, one of the dates is largely destroyed, with only the number three clearly evident (Figure 5.1a). In the central axis of the serpent's body, however, the day name Flint forms a dart point with the outflaring basal tangs typical of Teotihuacan-style projectile points (Figure 5.1b). Enclosed in a circular cartouche, it has a coefficient of two in the form of two circles. Like groups in southeastern Mesoamerica, the teotihuacanos used the bar-and-dot system, but in contrast with the southern Veracruz and Maya systems, the placement of the coefficient is consistent with Zapotec- and Ñuiñe-style calendric notation, occurring not in front or above but below the day sign. Moreover, at Teotihuacan the bars denoting five are typically marked with a pair of diagonal bands, a common trait of Zapotec writing. Caso (1967:171, 179) noted the use of a dart point to denote the eighteenth day name, Flint, at later Xochicalco, and this convention also occurs at Tula. The dart point as a day name appears in Late Preclassic texts from Mound J at Monte Albán and likely also denotes the day Flint (see Caso 1947:Figure 68).

The tecalli serpent displays another coefficient and day name, in this case the date 8 Flower (Figure 5.1c). The four-petaled floral day sign also

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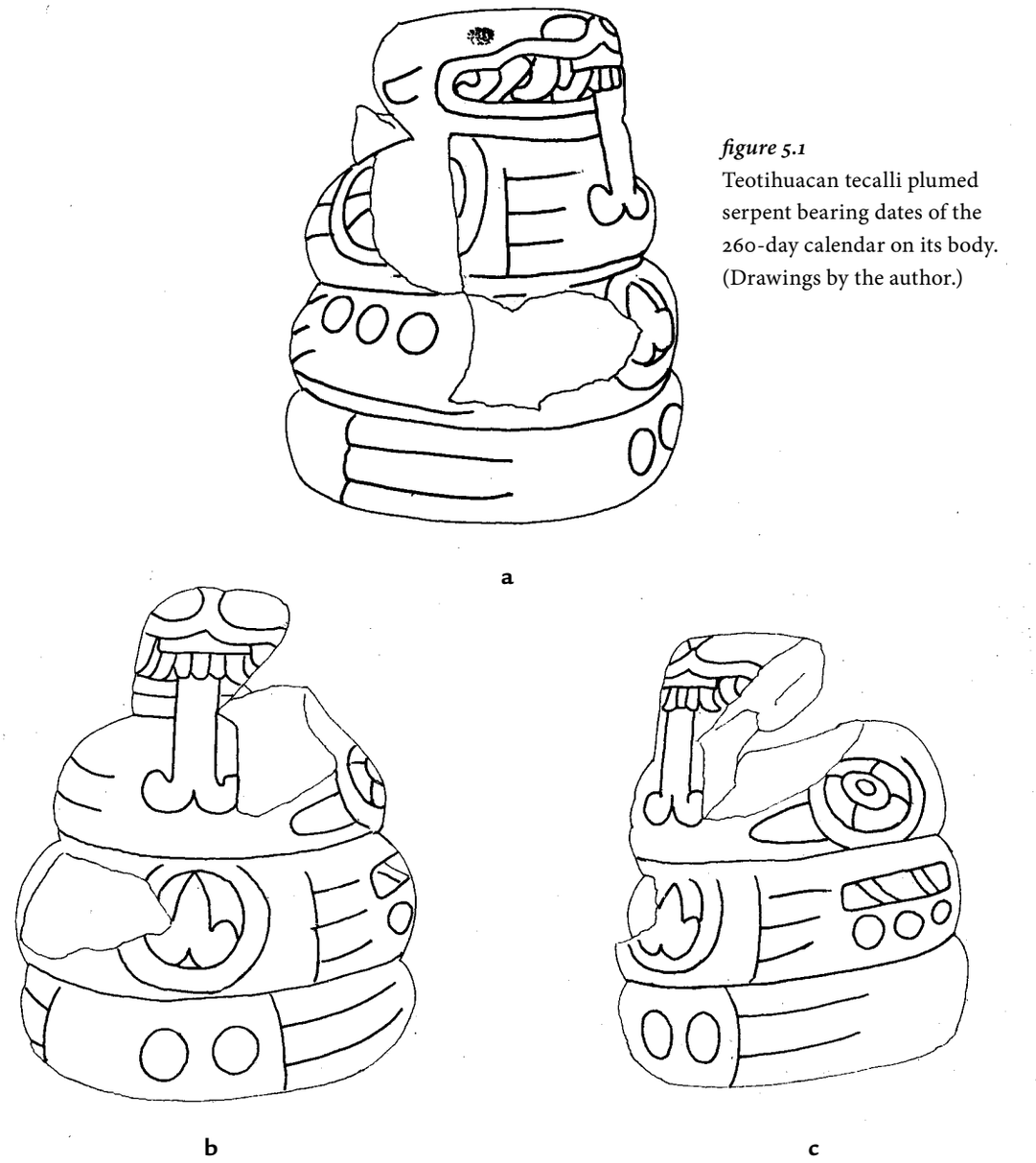

figure 5.1
Teotihuacan tecalli plumed serpent bearing dates of the 260-day calendar on its body. (Drawings by the author.)

appears on a Teotihuacan-style statuette bearing the date 5 Flower in the center of the chest (Figure 5.2a). The back of the figure displays the date 8 Deer and 8 Glyph A, a sign to be discussed subsequently. Cerro de las Mesas Stela 15 depicts a Teotihuacan-style figure with three dates. The first is the day name Flower with the coefficient missing (Figure 5.2d). The other dates appear to be 1 Jaguar and 4 Water. The four-petaled Flower sign appears on Teotihuacan-style stelae from the vicinity of Cerro Bernal, Chiapas, which display other day names as well (Figures 5.2b–c; see García-Des Lauriers 2007; Taube 2000b). For example, two dates occur on Los Horcones Stela 2 (Figure 5.2b). Claudia García-Des Lauriers (2007:197, Figure 7.2) has identified the first glyph as the date 1 Reed and the second as 11 Water. A Teotihuacan-style stela attributed to Guerrero has the date of 3 House, which possibly served as the calendar name of the figure (see Figure 5.14a). The day name is denoted by a frontal depiction of a temple in contrast to most Classic and Postclassic central Mexican examples rendered as temples in profile.

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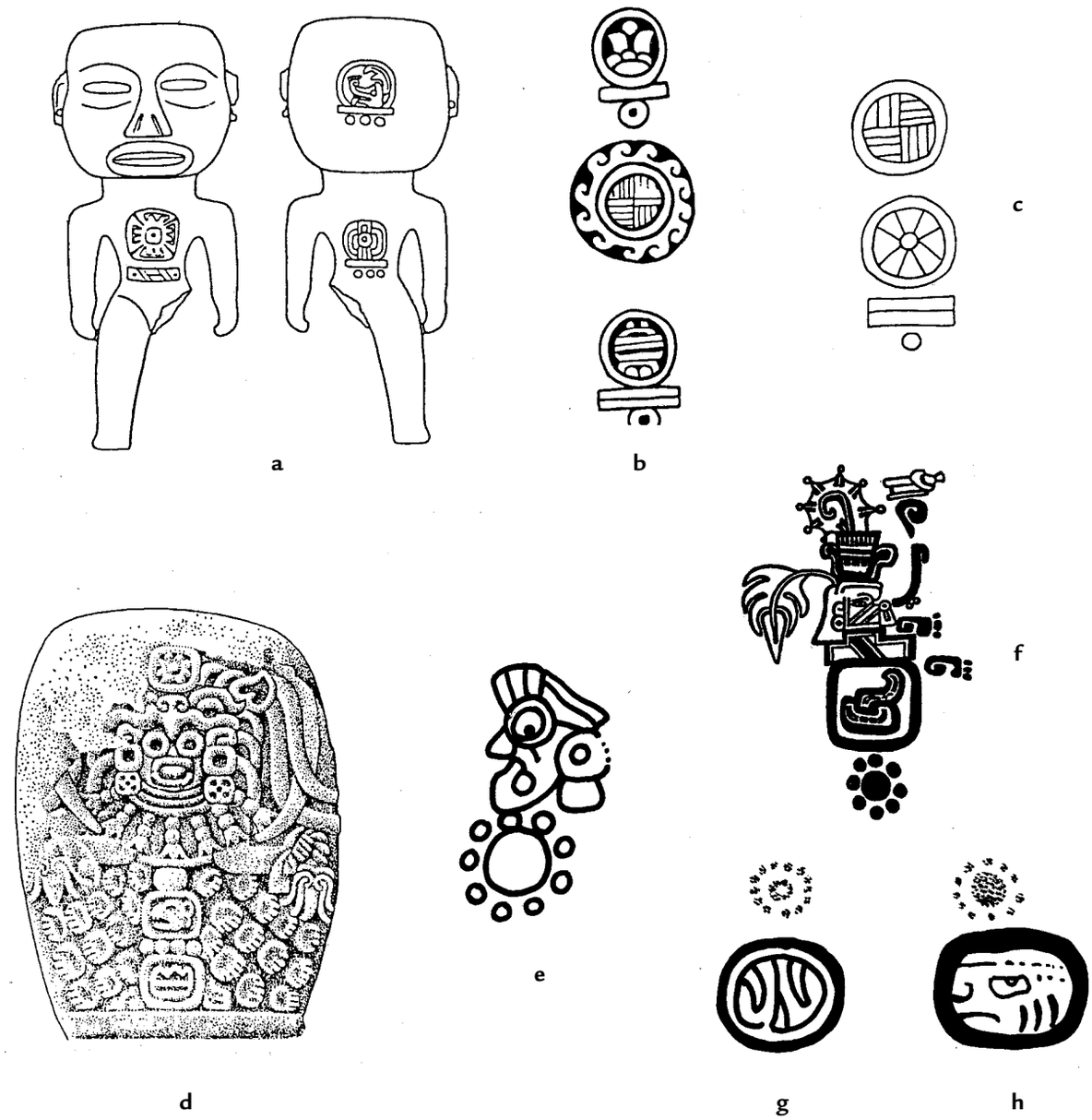

figure 5.2
Examples of day name glyphs and numerical coefficients in Mesoamerican writing: a) Teotihuacan statuette bearing three dates of the 260-day calendar (reprinted from Urcid Serrano 2001:Figure 4.160); b) Teotihuacan-style text with probable dates of 6 Reed and 11 Water, Los Horcones Stela 2 (drawing by the author, after Taube 2000b:Figure 33a); c) Teotihuacan-style text with probable date of 11 Flower, Fracción Mujular Stela 3 (drawing by the author, after Taube 2000b:Figure 33b); d) Teotihuacan-style figure with three dates along central axis of its body, Cerro de las Mesas Stela 15 (reprinted from Stirling 1943:Figure 14a); e) possible date of 1 Rain, Plaza de los Glifos, Teotihuacan (drawing by the author, after Cabrera Castro 1996:33); f) coefficient onw as dotted circle, detail of mural, Tepelmeme de Morelos, Oaxaca (reprinted from Urcid Serrano 2001:Figure 1.7a); g) Maya date of 1 Ak'bal, with coefficient as dotted red circle, Codex Paris, page 20 (drawing by the author); and h) Maya date of 1 Eb, Codex Madrid, folio 29b (drawing by the author).

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A painted glyph from the Plaza de Los Glifos at La Ventilla, Teotihuacan, may be an example of the sign for the day Rain (Figure 5.2e). In this case, the head of the Teotihuacan Tlaloc is accompanied by a disk rimmed with a series of dots. In ancient Mesoamerica, this element can denote the number one. Thus a disk surrounded by dots occurs as a coefficient of 1 in the Protoclassic murals at Tepelmeme de Morelos, Oaxaca (Figure 5.2f). Moreover, red disks rimmed with dots clearly denote the number one in the Late Postclassic Maya Paris and Madrid codices (Figures 5.2g–h). In the case of the Teotihuacan example, the Tlaloc head and dotted disk probably denote the date 1 Rain.

The seven examples of day names that have been discussed for Teotihuacan—Flint, Flower, Deer, Jaguar, Reed, House, and Rain—resemble well-known signs documented for the sixteenth century. However, other day name signs known for Teotihuacan and later central Mexican cultures do not resemble forms known for the sixteenth century, making their identification difficult. One such example is the so-called Reptile's Eye glyph, which was first named by Hermann Beyer (1922) in his

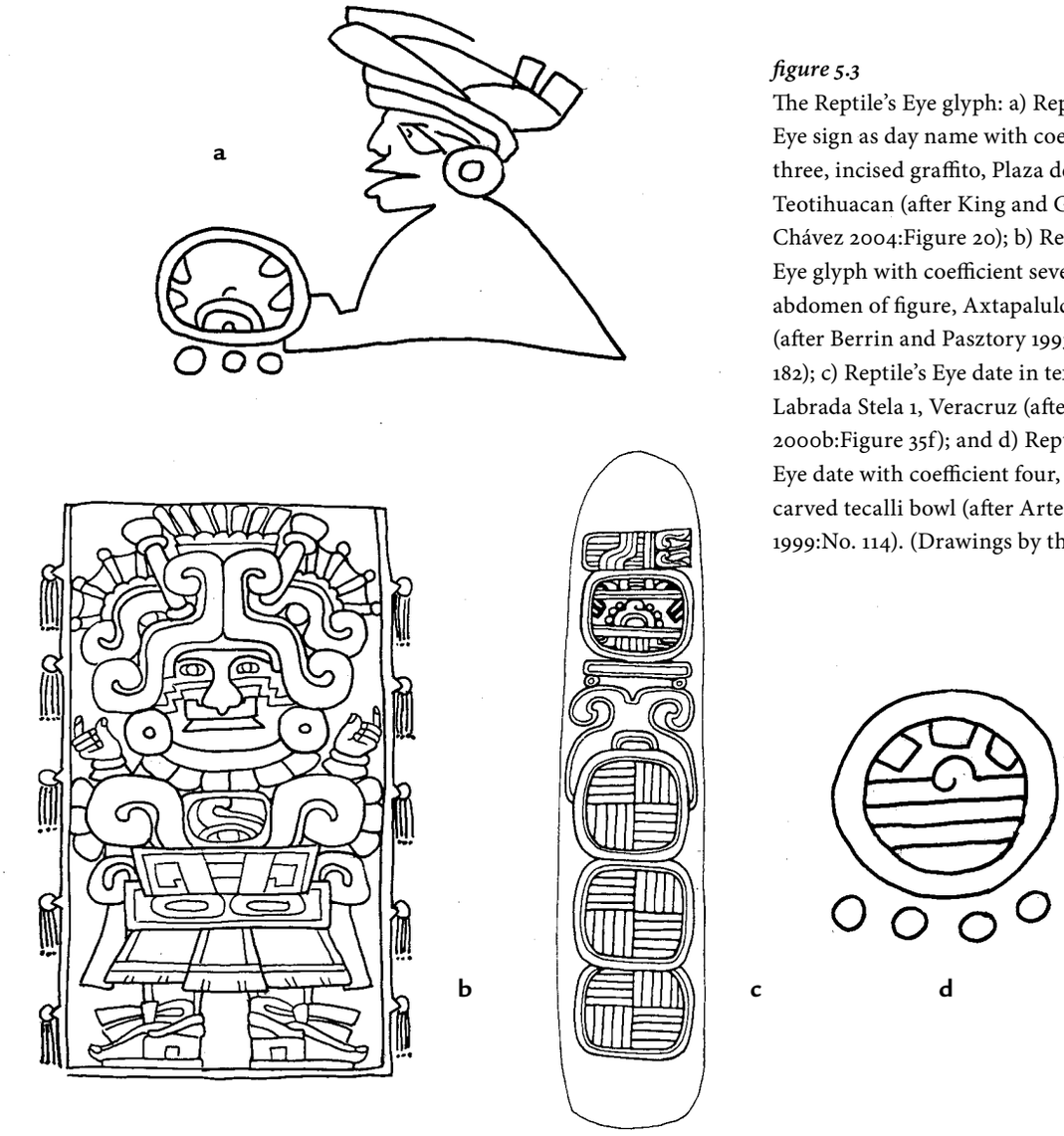

figure 5.3
The Reptile's Eye glyph: a) Reptile's Eye sign as day name with coefficient three, incised graffito, Plaza de los Glifos, Teotihuacan (after King and Gómez Chávez 2004:Figure 20); b) Reptile's Eye glyph with coefficient seven on abdomen of figure, Axtapalulca Plaque (after Berrin and Pasztory 1993:No. 182); c) Reptile's Eye date in text, Piedra Labrada Stela 1, Veracruz (after Taube 2000b:Figure 35f); and d) Reptile's Eye date with coefficient four, detail of carved tecalli bowl (after Arte Primitivo 1999:No. 114). (Drawings by the author.)

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discussion of the Teotihuacan-style Axtapalulca Plaque (Figure 5.3b). Carved in tecalli, the plaque portrays a standing figure with this sign accompanied by the number seven. In his first study concerning Teotihuacan writing, Caso (1937:Figures 1, 3, 13) noted this example and two others, one from an incised Teotihuacan vase and the other from Piedra Labrada Stela 1, Veracruz (Figure 5.3c). According to Hasso von Winning (1987:2:73–74), the Reptile's Eye glyph never appears with a coefficient at Teotihuacan, making it unlikely that it served as a calendrical day name. More recently, however, Timothy King and Sergio Gómez Chávez (2004:239) have noted that a graffito incised on a wall by the Plaza de los Glifos at Teotihuacan depicts a human figure with the date 3 Reptile's Eye (Figure 5.3a). The date may be the calendrical name of the figure. Another example occurs on an incised tecalli bowl, here with the coefficient four (Figure 5.3d). Although no longer in use before the Late Postclassic, the Reptile's Eye glyph continued to be used as a day name after the fall of Teotihuacan and appears at Xochicalco, Cacaxtla, Tula, and Chichen Itza.

Another important but enigmatic day sign of Teotihuacan is Glyph A, first described and named

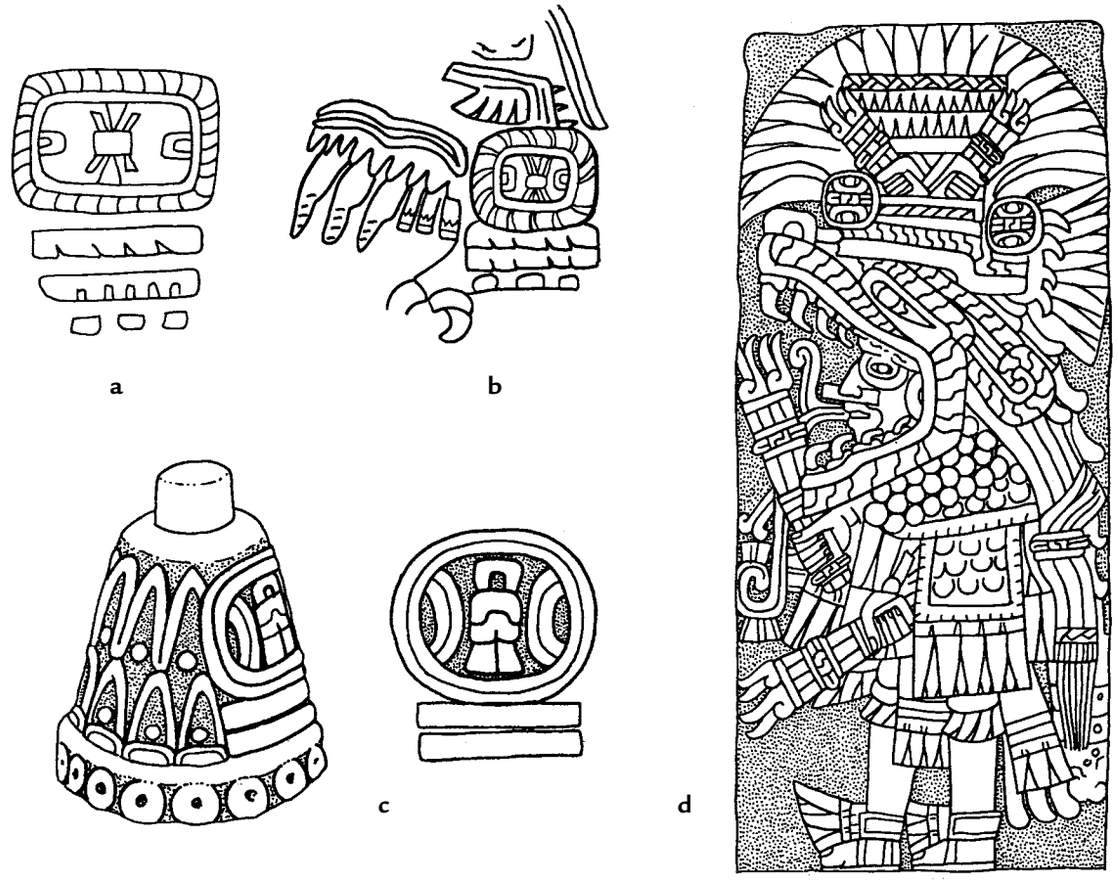

figure 5.4
Xochicalco Glyph A on earlier Teotihuacan-style vessels and monuments: a) incised date of 13 Glyph A within Teotihuacan vase (after Caso 1966:Figure 42f); b) date of 13 Glyph A on torso of probable eagle, detail of fragmentary Teotihuacan vessel (after Séjourné 1966:Figure 149); c) section of Teotihuacan-style marcador with date of 10 Glyph A (after Taube 2001:Figure 2); and d) monument portraying plumed serpent figure with two Glyph A signs in headdress (after Taube 2000b:Figure 35g). (Drawings by the author.)

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by Caso (1967:173) for Xochicalco (Figure 5.4). The sign is composed of a vertical knot flanked by two half circles. Aside from the one at Xochicalco, Caso (1966:275) identified an earlier example with the coefficient thirteen incised on a Teotihuacan vase (Figure 5.4a). The same date of 13 Glyph A also appears on another Teotihuacan vessel, here atop the abdomen of a bird (Figure 5.4b). Along with the dates 5 Flower and 8 Serpent, the aforementioned serpentine statuette displays a Glyph A with the coefficient eight (see Figure 5.2a). A segment from a Teotihuacan stone "*marcador*" resembling the two well-known examples excavated at La Ventilla, Teotihuacan, and El Mundo Perdido, Tikal, bears a clear date of 10 Glyph A surrounded by a repetitive motif denoting mountains (Figure 5.4c). A probable stela attributed to Veracruz depicts a figure dressed as the plumed serpent with a pair of Glyph A signs in his headdress (Figure 5.4d). Although present at Early Classic Teotihuacan, Glyph A is probably Zapotec in origin and appears still earlier on Monte Albán II monuments (Urcid Serrano 2001:156).

A Teotihuacan polychrome mural fragment in the collection of the Museo Diego Rivera portrays an elaborate circular day sign surrounded by

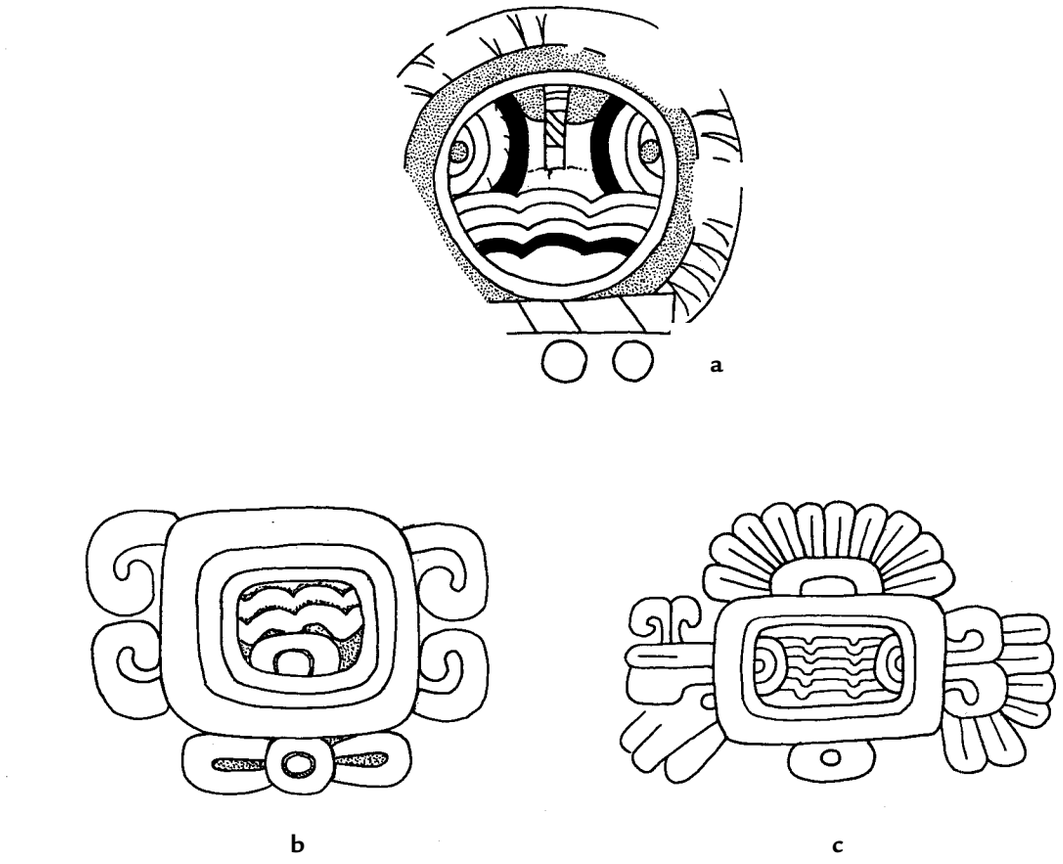

figure 5.5
Comparison of Teotihuacan day sign with Terminal Classic glyphs for day Water: a) polychrome Teotihuacan day sign with coefficient at base, detail of Teotihuacan mural fragment (after Fuente 1996:Plate 3); b) date 1 Water, detail of Terminal Classic stela in the Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City (after Fuente et al. 1988:No. 155); and c) probable sign for day name Water, appearing at base of stela from Piedra Labrada, Guerrero (after Caso 1967:176, Figure 13b). (Drawings by the author.)

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a green feather rim and the coefficient eight or nine at the base (Figure 5.5a). Although the sign displays the halved circles found with Xochicalco Glyph A, it also has an undulating lower portion resembling Classic period Mexican signs for the day Water. A Terminal Classic stela in the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City portrays the date 1 Water with undulating water bands and an eye-like element below, recalling the pair appearing on the sides of the Teotihuacan mural fragment (Figure 5.5b). However, a roughly contemporaneous stela from Piedra Labrada, Guerrero, is closer still, as it has both the undulating water bands and the halved circles on the sides (Figure 5.5c). It is likely that the halved circles also allude to water. In Teotihuacan iconography, similar forms appear in water as eyes, probably to denote a shining, glistening surface (see Figure 5.18a). According to Caso (1966:177), the Piedra Labrada sign denotes the day Water, and this may also be the case for the Teotihuacan glyph. However, the mural example also has a vertical element strongly resembling the day Reed, and this sign could well be an elaborate version of the Reed glyph growing out of a pool of water.

Toponyms, Titles, and Personal Names at Teotihuacan

Aside from dates in the 260-day calendar, there are many other examples of glyphic use at Teotihuacan. Jorge Angulo (1972) was the first to note probable toponyms in the Portico 2 murals at Tepantitla, Teotihuacan (Figure 5.6a). Recently documented and studied by Jennifer Browder (2005), the murals contain over forty glyphs, many appearing as compounds with flowering plants, on hills, or with speech scrolls. All of these contexts also commonly appear with Nahuatl writing of the sixteenth century (Taube 2000b). Along with Tepantitla, the Plaza de los Glifos from the sector La Ventilla of Teotihuacan provides a major corpus of glyphs, although the use and meaning of these signs remain unknown (see Cabrera Castro 1996; King and Gómez Chávez 2004). Nonetheless, as in Tepantitla, this major body of glyphic signs allows for detailed comparisons with not only other Teotihuacan texts but other writings systems of Mesoamerica. For example, one sign, a strung bead, is also documented for Teotihuacan-style writing from the Escuintla region of Guatemala, at Early Postclassic Chichen Itza, and for early colonial Nahuatl writing (Figures 5.6b–d). Another sign, the wrinkled and toothless face of an old man, is found at Tepantitla as well (Figures 5.6e–f). The head of an aged man also occurs in sixteenth-century Nahuatl writing, logographically serving either as the sign for *xolo*, meaning "wrinkled," or *hue* for "old" or "great" (Figures 5.6g–h).

Located in the northeastern portion of the city, the Techinantitla compound provides an especially important corpus of Teotihuacan writing. A group of murals portrays plumed serpents atop a series of trees with glyphic signs on their trunks (Pasztory 1988). The signs are specific to each of the trees, which all have distinct flowers, suggesting that they name the plants. Another body of murals portrays virtually identical human beings wearing tasseled headdresses that are made up of glyphic signs containing distinct signs serving as the heads or faces. Whereas the identical headdress signs may denote a shared office or title, the differing glyphs appearing in the region of the face are the names of the figures, the head being generally linked with personal identity in Mesoamerica (e.g., Houston and Stuart 1998).

Clara Millon (1973, 1988), the first to point out the Teotihuacan pattern of placing qualifying signs before similarly appearing individuals, noted that this convention not only appears in the Techinantitla murals, but also in other media, such as the Teotihuacan-style ceramic bowl from Las Colinas, Tlaxcala (see Taube 2000b:Figure 8). On the Las Colinas bowl, four figures engaged in hand-scattering stand before their glyphic signs. In contrast to those at Techinantitla, these glyphs are especially large and elaborate and are essentially the same size as the accompanying figures. For Teotihuacan, I (Taube 2000b) termed such complex signs emblematic glyphs.

Such emblematic glyphs often occur in Teotihuacan murals, both as signs accompanying figures and as independent texts. When appearing

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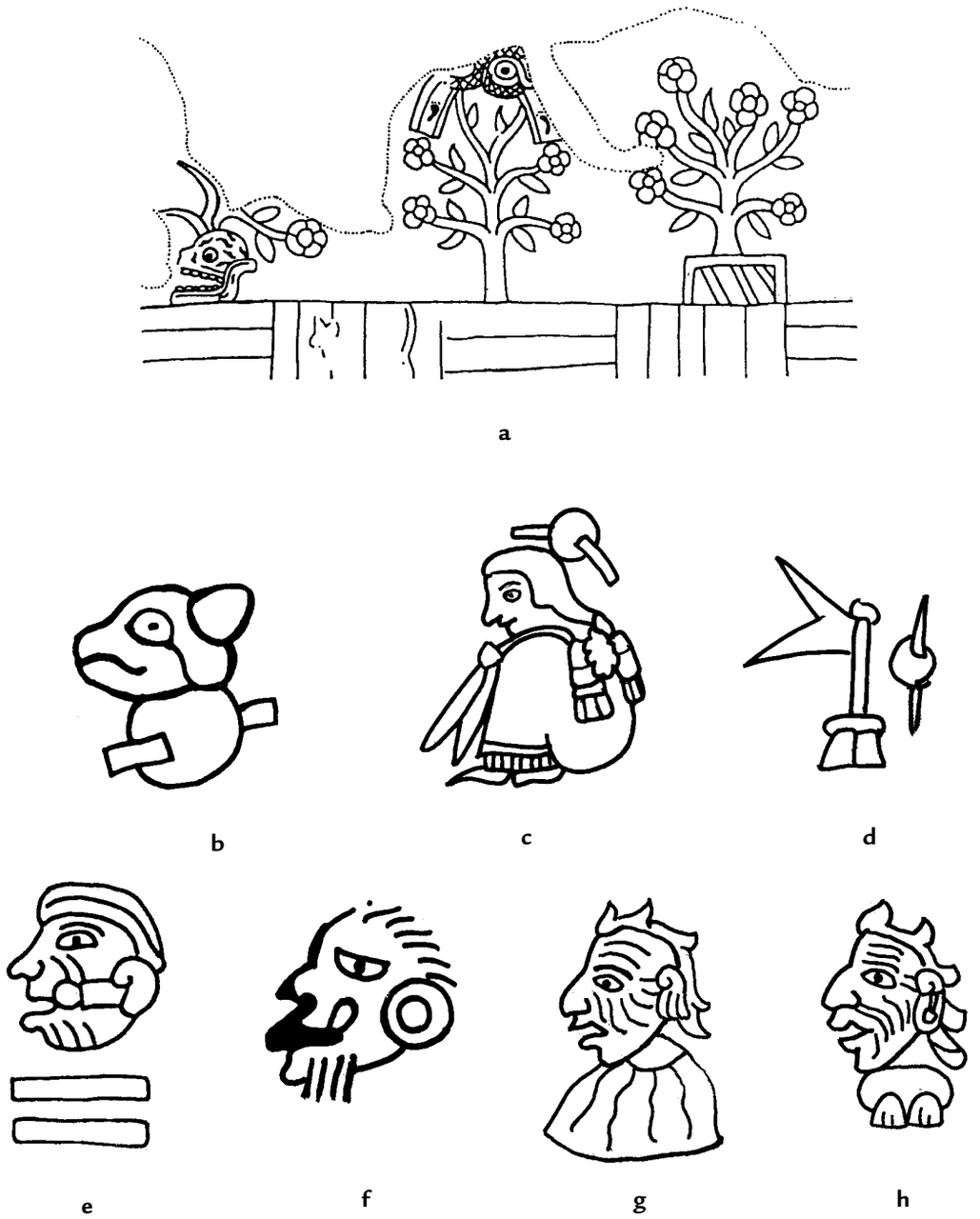

figure 5.6
Comparison of Teotihuacan and sixteenth-century Nahuatl glyphs: a) toponymic signs appearing with trees, detail of mural from Portico 2, Tepantitla (after Taube 2000b:Figure 4e); b) glyphic compound of feline head with strung bead sign, Plaza de los Glifos, Teotihuacan (after Cabrera Castro 1996:33); c) seated man with strung bead sign, Humboldt Fragment 1 (after Seler 1904:Plate 6); d) strung bead sign in name glyph for Luis Tlazopan, Códice de Santa María Asunción, folio 16r; e) wrinkled old man head with coefficient 10, Portico 2, Tepantitla (after Taube 2000b:Figure 23e); f) bearded old man glyph from Plaza de los Glifos, Teotihuacan (after Cabrera Castro 1996:33); g) head of old man in place-name for Xolochiuhyan, Codex Mendoza, folio 13r; and h) head of old man in place-name for Huehuetlan, Codex Mendoza, folio 13v. (Drawings by the author.)

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individually, such signs can often be identified by strange combinations of otherwise incongruent elements. Thus, one emblematic glyph from Tetitla features a temple roof surmounting a mouth rimmed with flames (Figure 5.7a). A stucco-painted vessel lid from La Herradura, Tlaxcala, portrays another temple roof, here atop the head of a supernatural feline (Figure 5.7b). At Teotihuacan, temple signs can also appear above butterfly nosepieces (Figure 5.7c). As Winning (1947:171) noted, the nosepiece appears to substitute for the *talud-tablero* platform of a temple. For all three examples, the temple group appears atop signs pertaining to the head or face: a toothy mouth, a feline head, and a nosepiece. The placement of the temple roof quite possibly pertains to a widespread Mesoamerican metaphor of temples as headdresses at Teotihuacan and elsewhere in ancient Mesoamerica (see Taube 1998:464). At Teotihuacan, the temple roof sign may be a toponymic reference to particular structures, with the glyph below being the specific name of the building. However, the lower sign could also refer to particular offices as well.[3] A stucco-painted

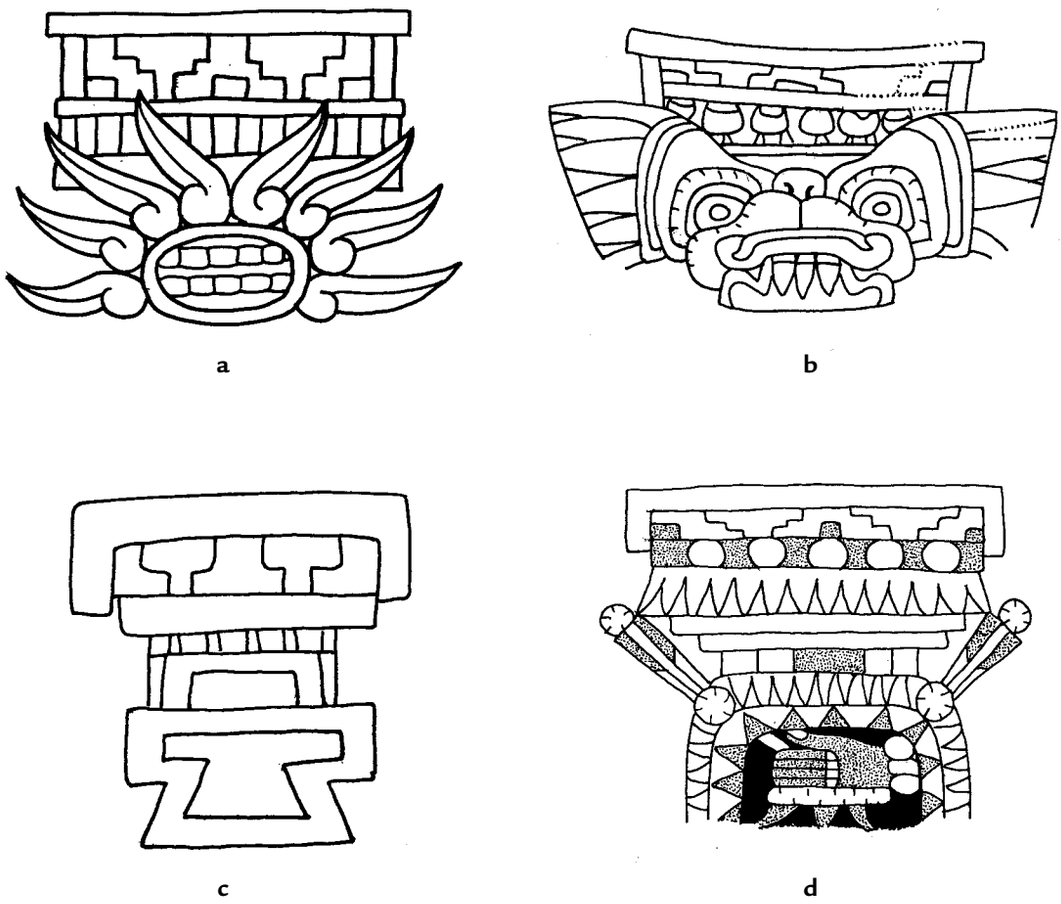

figure 5.7
Temple roofs and temples appearing in Teotihuacan emblematic signs: a) temple roof above mouth rimmed with flames (after Taube 2000b:Figure 20g); b) temple roof atop jaguar head (after Martínez Vargas and Jarquín Pacheco 1998:46); c) schematic temple atop butterfly nosepiece (after Séjourné 1966:Figure 48); and d) temple atop hand with shield and darts (after stucco-painted vase on display at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art). (Drawings by the author.)

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Teotihuacan vessel bears an emblematic glyph of a temple atop a shield and crossed darts (Figure 5.7d). As García-Des Lauriers (2008) notes, this may well be a precursor to the Aztec *tlacochcalco*, or house of darts, an imperial storehouse of military arms. In addition, a related term, *tlacochcalcatl*, or keepers of the house of darts, refers to individuals holding high-ranking military positions. In her study, García-Des Lauriers documents many examples of such Aztec office holders in which the glyphic title appearing by their heads is a structure with darts on its roof.

The presentation of a series of virtually identical figures with distinct accompanying glyphs is a very important convention for Teotihuacan writing, and it continues in central Mexico at Xochicalco, Tula, and with the Aztec (Taube 2000b). This highly regimented presentation of figures and glyphs recalls the military organization of groups of warriors or soldiers. One of the few comparable Classic Maya examples is Piedras Negras Panel 2, which portrays six kneeling youths dressed in Teotihuacan military garb, each distinguished by six glyphic compounds (see Taube 2000b:Figure 11). A recently discovered

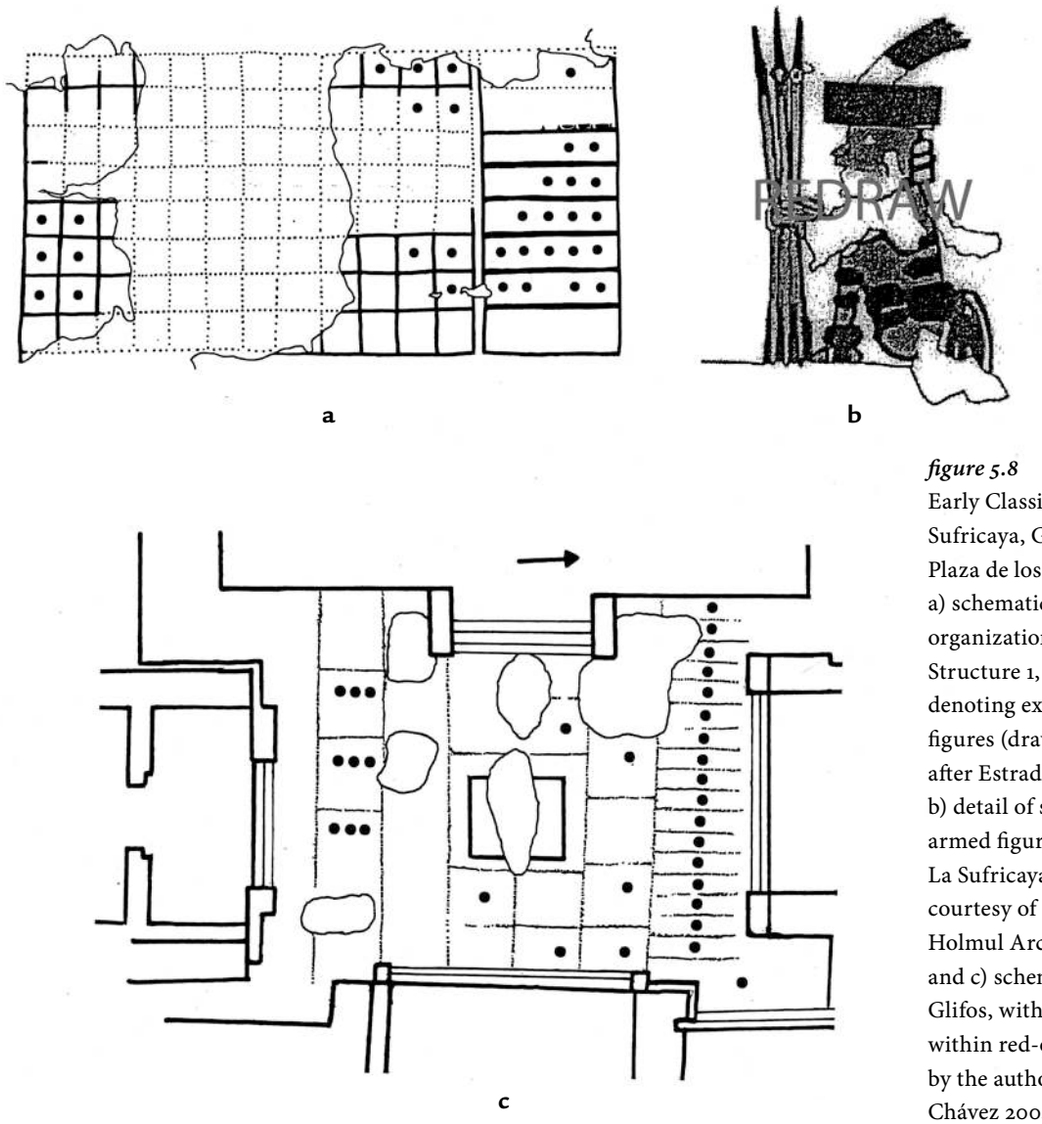

figure 5.8
Early Classic painted grids at La Sufricaya, Guatemala, and the Plaza de los Glifos, Teotihuacan: a) schematic portrayal of grid organization appearing in Mural 1, Structure 1, La Sufricaya, with dots denoting extant remains of human figures (drawing by the author, after Estrada Belli 2003:Figure 62); b) detail of seated Teotihuacan armed figure from right side of La Sufricaya grid plan (drawing courtesy of Heather Hurst and the Holmul Archaeological Project); and c) schematic plan of Plaza de los Glifos, with dots denoting glyphs within red-outlined grid (drawing by the author, after King and Gómez Chávez 2004:Figure 3).

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mural from La Sufricaya, Guatemala, portrays a series of many figures within grids of red lines (Figure 5.8a; see Estrada-Belli 2001). To the right side of the scene, seated warriors grasp bundles of spear-thrower darts, a number of which are trilobate in form, a common trait of Teotihuacan darts (Estrada-Belli 2001:686; Figure 5.8b; cf. Figures 5.1b, 5.10f–g, 5.11b–d, 5.14a, and 5.16a–c). Another mural from the same building group at La Sufricaya refers to the 11 Eb 15 Mak Tikal *entrada* of AD January 31, 378 (Estrada-Belli et al. 2006). As noted by David Stuart (2000, 2004), this date concerns the arrival of teotihuacanos to Tikal as well as the probable usurpation of the Tikal dynasty.

Central Mexican Examples of Writing in Grids

Elisabeth Wagner (2004) has compared the mural at La Sufricaya to the Plaza of the Glyphs in the compound at La Ventilla, which features a plaza floor marked with Teotihuacan glyphs within an elaborate grid demarcated by red lines (Figure 5.8c). To date, the most extensive study of this crucial corpus of Teotihuacan writing is by King and Gómez Chávez (2004:205–206), who note that the plaza probably pertained to institutional activities with the glyphs denoting place-names, personal names, and titles, as well as vocations or barrio names.

At La Sufricaya, the placement of identical figures within a grid also recalls sixteenth-century Nahuatl conventions. Thus the introductory scene of the Lienzo de Tlaxcala features the busts of 143 nobles within grids.[4] However, the series of twenty lords and their tributary vassals appearing in the Codex Kingsborough (ff. 4a–6b) is especially similar to the mural at La Sufricaya (Figure 5.9b). The lords occur on the far right, with the named vassals seated in a series of rectangles before them. Although largely covered by mantles, the lords and vassals are clearly seated "Mexican style" with their knees drawn up to their chests, the same posture adopted by the seated warrior figures to the far right of the mural at La Sufricaya (see Figure 5.8b). Originally, this mural section probably had five registers, each containing five armed and seated figures. They face figures standing within a much larger grid that probably contained ninety-six units. Although the horizontal lines for the two groups align, a vertical gap separates them, suggesting a distinction in role or status. Francisco Estrada-Belli (2001:686) notes that remnant costume elements of the standing individuals from an adjacent mural grid in the same chamber suggest that they are probably Maya, in contrast to the seated and armed Teotihuacan warriors. As in the case of the lords and vassals in the Codex Kingsborough, the weapon-wielding teotihuacanos may well be overseeing the Maya standing before them.

The orientation of the glyphs at La Ventilla suggests that they were viewed from the north platform, with the quadrangles at this side being much narrower, less than half the width of those appearing in the rest of the plaza (see Figure 5.8b). Marked with single glyphs, these northern rectangles may pertain to tributary lords, such as appear in the Codex Kingsborough (Figure 5.9b). The larger quadrangles to the south could denote individual apartment compounds, that is, the Plaza of the Glyphs may be an administrative node for a Teotihuacan barrio, here portrayed by a map of named apartment compounds. Such a plaza could readily function as a place to receive tribute from various compounds or as a means to convey raw goods to various workshops located within them. If shown as a map of certain apartment compounds, the Plaza of the Glyphs would resemble El Plano del Papel de Maguey, which is a map featuring named tributary households in a gridlike system of *chinampas* at Tenochtitlan (Figure 5.9a). Each household appears with seven chinampa fields separated above and below by horizontal black lines connecting to vertical roads or canals. Of course, the most developed example of a grid plan known for all of ancient Mesoamerica is the great metropolis of Teotihuacan, with over two thousand apartment compounds as well as monumental architecture sharing the same basic orientation. Such a city would virtually demand maps of the apartment compounds, each of these glyphically labeled by their place-names or occupants. Far

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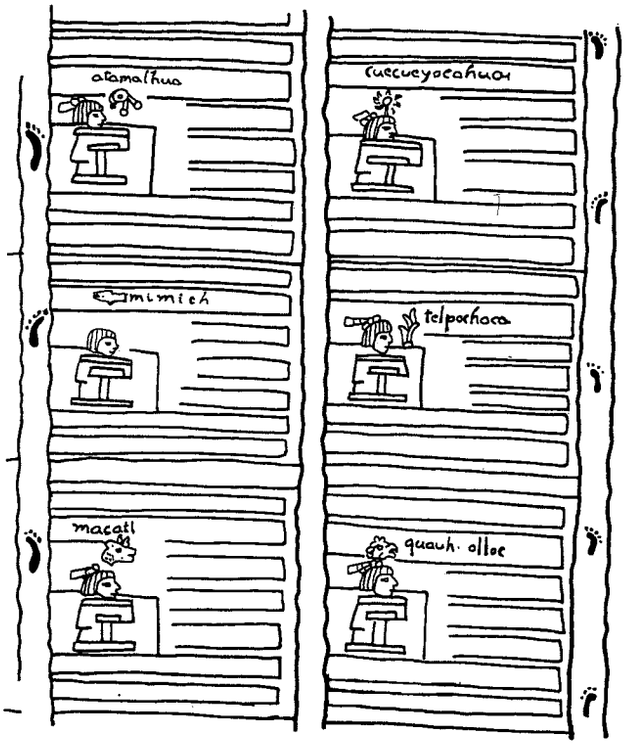

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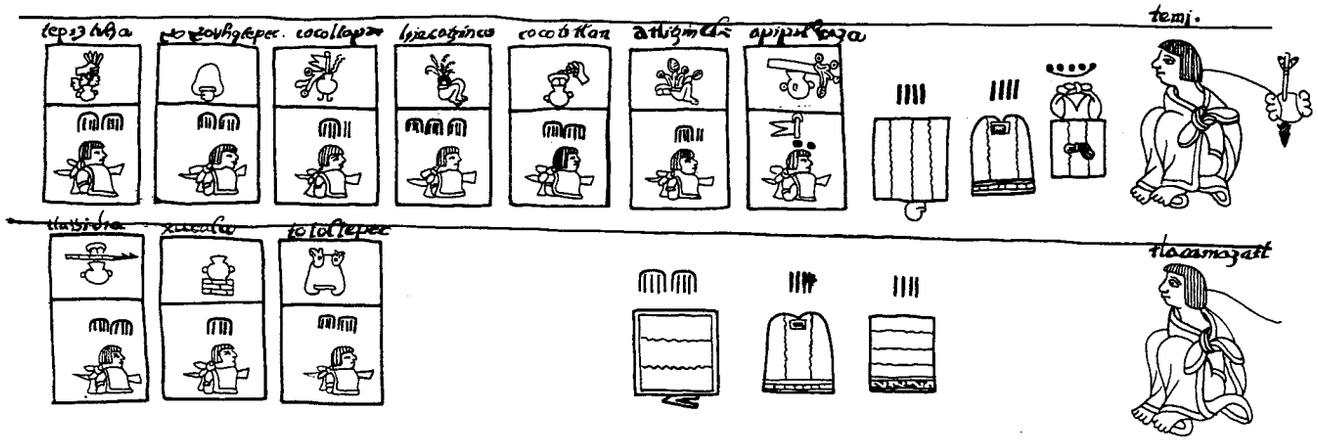

b

figure 5.9
Grid plans in sixteenth-century Nahuatl documents: a) grid demarcating units of seven chinampa fields with named heads of households (after detail of the Plano del Papel de Maguey); and b) tributary lords facing named subordinates in grid, Codex Kingsborough, folio 5r (detail). (Drawings by the author.)

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from being unwieldy, such a map could readily be painted on cloth, a medium that not only is light, durable, and easily transportable, but also presents few limitations in size.

Teotihuacan Glyphs Appearing on Classic Maya and Zapotec Monuments

At times, Early Classic monuments from Tikal and other sites of the Maya Lowlands bear Teotihuacan glyphs. The most striking example is the marcador from El Mundo Perdido at Tikal, which displays large Teotihuacan glyphs on its upper portion, with some of the same signs appearing in the accompanying Maya text on the supporting column below (Figure 5.10a–d). The Maya text of the monument mentions its dedication in AD 416, the Teotihuacan entrada of AD 378 (Stuart 2000). Aside from the marcador monument, other examples of Teotihuacan signs appear in Early Classic Maya texts (Figure 5.10e–g). The sculpture known as El Hombre de Tikal bears a long inscription on its back. The text includes the Maya phrase *siyaj*, meaning "born of," followed by a vertical Teotihuacan dart, with the feathered butt and trilobate point clearly evident (Figure 5.10f). Although rare, the Dart sign continues in Late Classic Maya script. An incised bone from Tikal Burial 116 mentions the name of a Calakmul lord currently referred to as Split Earth Caban. The final portion of his name features a vertical dart

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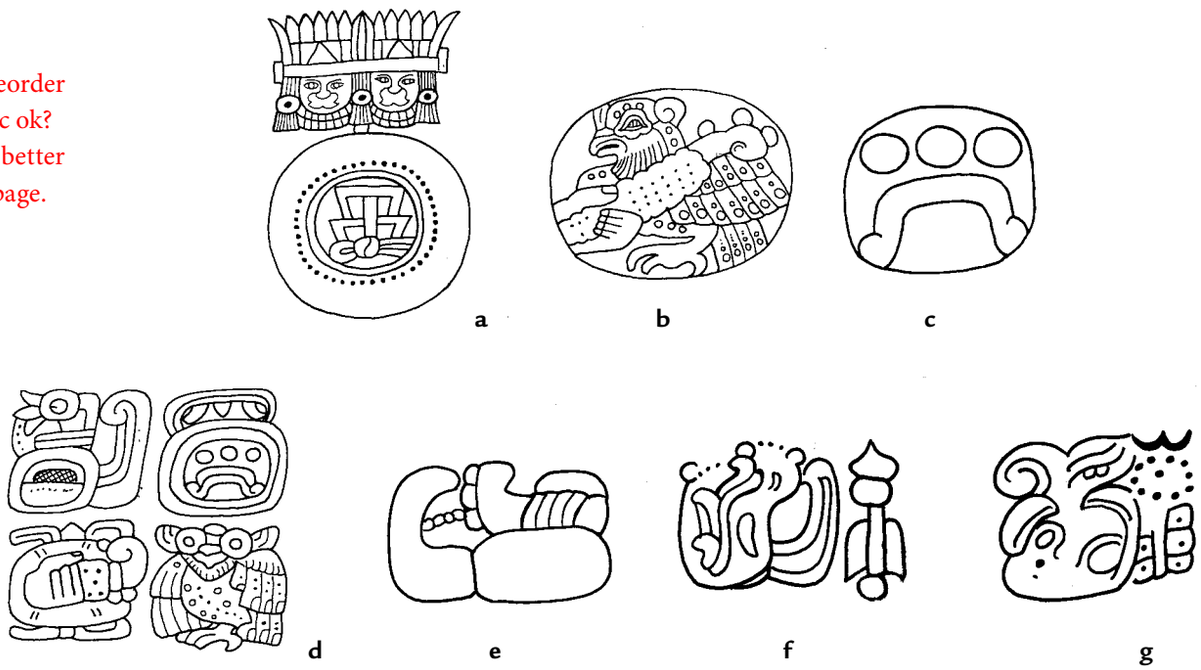

figure 5.10
Teotihuacan signs appearing in Classic texts at Tikal: a) Teotihuacan text appearing on Early Classic stone marcador from El Mundo Perdido, Tikal (after Laporte and Fialko 1995:Figure 46); b) name glyph for Spear-Thrower Owl appearing one side of marcador disk (after Laporte and Fialko 1995:Figure 46); c) Tlaloc glyph appearing on opposite side of marcador disk (after Laporte and Fialko 1995:Figure 46); d) detail of text on column of marcador mentioning erection of monument, along with the name of Spear-Thrower Owl (after Laporte and Fialko 1995:Figure 47); e) Early Classic glyphic compound with handheld spear-thrower, Tikal, Stela 1 (after Jones and Satterthwaite 1982:Figure 1); f) glyphic compound with vertical Teotihuacan-style dart, detail of Early Classic text on back of El Hombre de Tikal (after Fahsen 1988:Figure 4); and g) Late Classic glyphic compound with vertical Teotihuacan-style dart, detail of text from incised bone from Tikal, Burial 116 (after Martin and Grube 2007:111). (Drawings by the author.)

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oriented with the point upward, as in the case of El Hombre de Tikal (Figure 5.10g). Although tantalizing, the Teotihuacan glyphs in Early Classic Maya texts offer little insight into the language of Teotihuacan, as they are logographs and could perhaps even refer to Mayan words. Thus although the Late Classic temple text from Structure 26 at Copan displays elaborate glyphs with Teotihuacan motifs, the "Teotihuacan" glyphs are still wholly Maya and closely parallel an accompanying text written in pure Maya style (Stuart 2000:495–497).

Like the ancient Maya, the Classic Zapotec rarely presented series of similarly appearing individuals with distinguishing name glyphs. However, two examples occur on monuments from the South Platform at Monte Albán, and it is surely no coincidence that the figures are probably teotihuacanos (see Marcus 1983). In the case of Stela 7, four individuals wear versions of the "tassel headdress" known for Teotihuacan (Marcus 1983:Figure 6.5). The upper edge of the Estela Lisa also portrays four figures dressed in Teotihuacan garb, including three individuals wearing platelet military helmets (Marcus 1983:Figure 6.5). However, as with Stela 7, the Teotihuacan figures are not armed. Noting the lack of weapons on Teotihuacan figures at Monte Albán, Joyce Marcus (1983:180) suggested "that some kind of ambassadorial relations are involved, without a hint of military activity." However, aside from the helmets on the Estela Lisa, more recent discoveries at Monte Albán do indeed indicate Teotihuacan militarism.

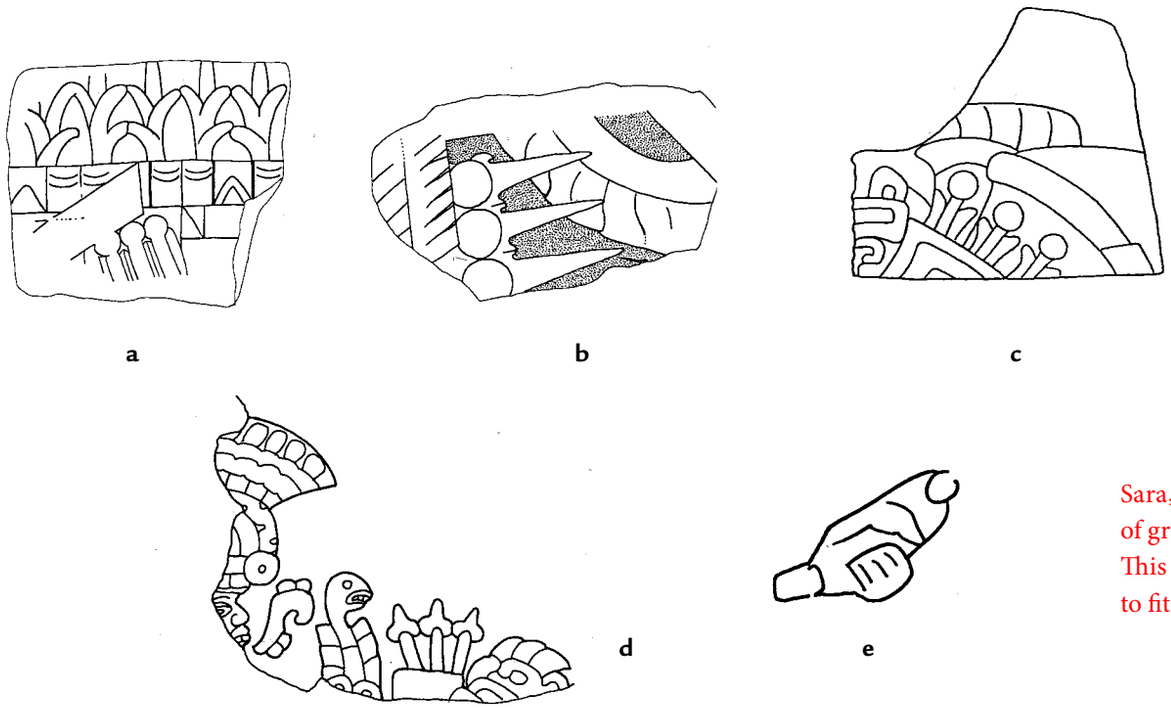

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figure 5.11
Teotihuacan weaponry appearing on Teotihuacan and Monte Albán monuments: a) Teotihuacan monument fragment with series of feathered dart butts; b) Teotihuacan monument fragment of darts under probable shield; c) Monte Albán monument fragment with Teotihuacan-style darts under shield (after drawing provided by Javier Urcid Serrano); d) columnar fragment portraying Teotihuacan-style figure with serpent spear-thrower with shield and darts, Monte Albán (after drawing provided by Javier Urcid Serrano); and e) glyph of hand grasping spear-thrower, Lápida de Bazan. (Drawings by the author.)

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One fragmentary monument depicts the feathered ends of Teotihuacan-style darts apparently under a shield, recalling a similar series of dart butts on a massive fragmentary monument at Teotihuacan (Figure 5.11c; cf. Figure 5.11a).

Another Monte Albán monument, a fragmentary column, is still more intriguing (Figure 5.11d). The shield and dart motif occurs at the lower portion, here with projecting dart points rather than the feathered butts. As in the case of many Teotihuacan-style portrayals of darts, the points are trilobate. The column also features a human figure who appears to have a Teotihuacan headdress, complete with shell goggles on the brow. The curious element directly in front of the figure probably is his spear-thrower in the form of a serpent, recalling the Xiuhcoatl serpent spear-thrower of the Aztec Huitzilopochtli. At the lower broken edge of the column, portions of the two finger rings can be discerned. Another Monte Albán monument, the Lápida de Bazan, features a Teotihuacan figure standing behind a Zapotec ruler (see Marcus 1983:Figure 6.7). A number of glyphs in the accompanying text are clearly of Teotihuacan origin, including a tasseled headdress sign. In addition, one of the glyphs is a hand grasping a spear-thrower (Figure 5.11e). As in the case of hands holding spear-throwers in Early Classic texts from Tikal, this overtly militaristic glyphic sign derives from Teotihuacan.

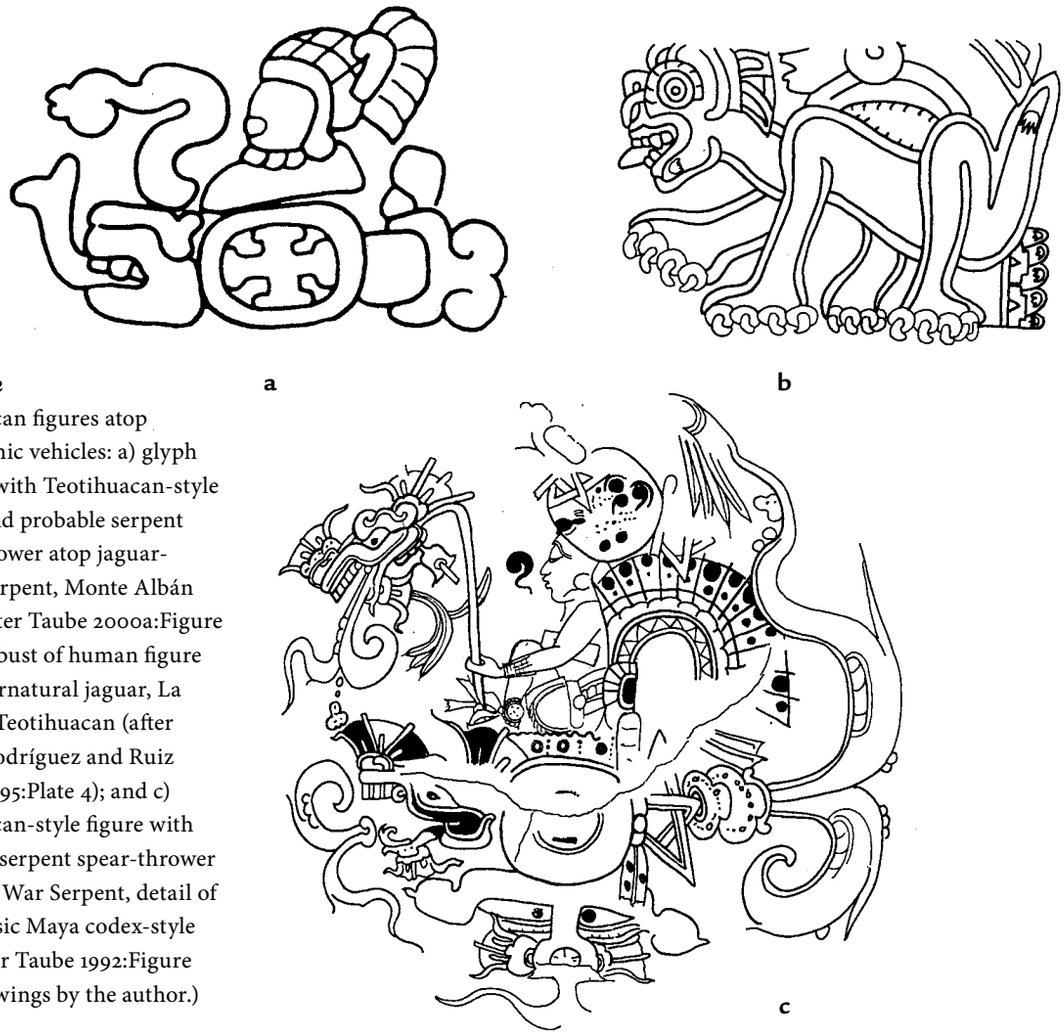

figure 5.12
Teotihuacan figures atop zoomorphic vehicles: a) glyph of figure with Teotihuacan-style helmet and probable serpent spear-thrower atop jaguar-headed serpent, Monte Albán Stela 1 (after Taube 2000a:Figure 10.8a); b) bust of human figure atop supernatural jaguar, La Ventilla, Teotihuacan (after Padilla Rodríguez and Ruiz Zúñiga 1995:Plate 4); and c) Teotihuacan-style figure with symbolic serpent spear-thrower seated on War Serpent, detail of Late Classic Maya codex-style bowl (after Taube 1992:Figure 8d). (Drawings by the author.)

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One of the monuments from the South Platform featuring Teotihuacan-style glyphs, Monte Albán Stela 1, displays a glyphic sign of a Teotihuacan warrior with another probable version of a serpent spear-thrower (Figure 5.12a). Rendered only as a bust, he wears a platelet helmet with a tasseled feline ear, such as is worn by one of the Teotihuacan figures on the Estela Lisa (see Marcus 1983:Figure 6.5). In addition, the figure is atop a disk with the head of a serpent-tongued jaguar on one side and rattlesnake tail on the other, a portrayal of the War Serpent. The sign is notably similar to a Late Classic Maya vessel scene depicting a male dressed in Teotihuacan garb and wielding a War Serpent spear-thrower while riding atop the same creature with a burning rattlesnake tail (Figure 5.12c; for discussion, see Taube 2000a:281). The depiction of a human bust atop a zoomorphic vehicle also appears at La Ventilla, Teotihuacan; such scenes should probably be regarded as emblematic glyphs (Figure 5.12b).

Teotihuacan-Style Monumental Texts in Guerrero

Aside from the Maya and Zapotec regions, Teotihuacan-style imagery and monuments are a strong presence in western Mexico, especially in the contemporary state of Guerrero. A stela from

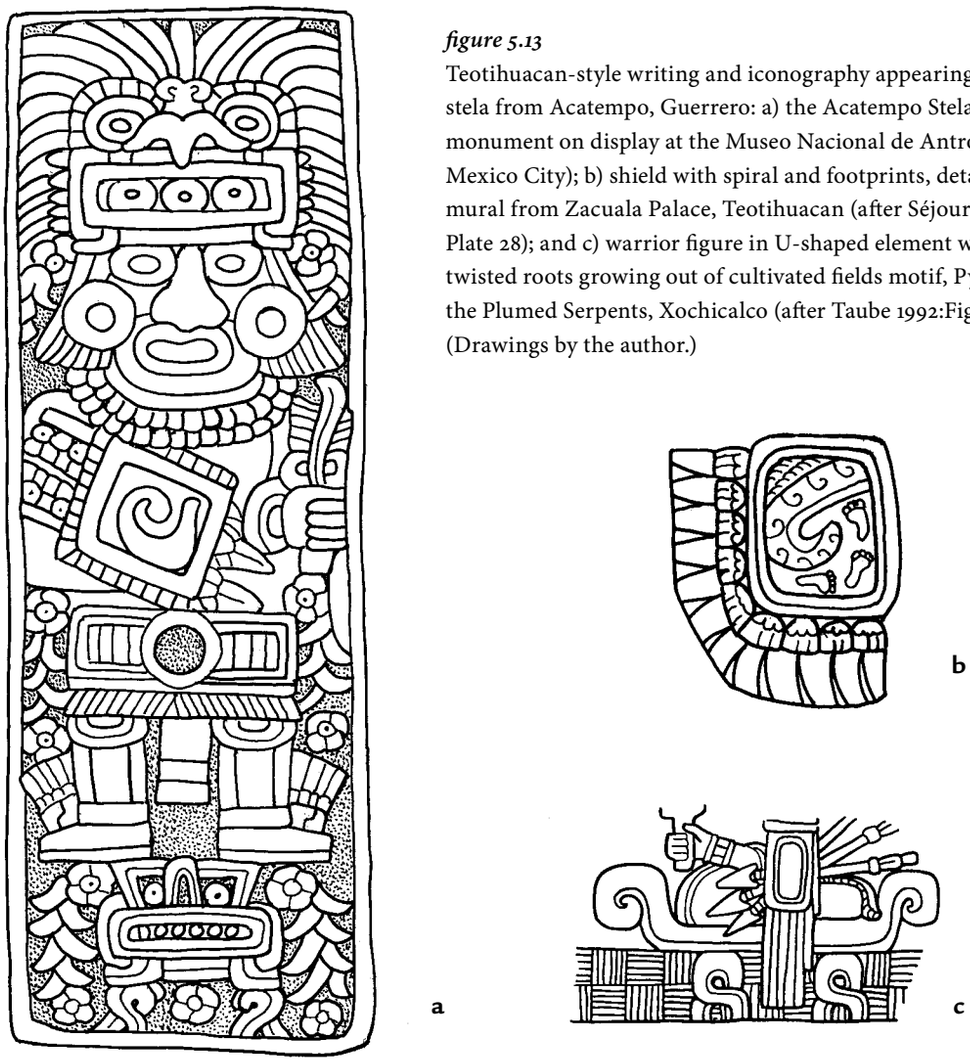

figure 5.13
Teotihuacan-style writing and iconography appearing on stela from Acatempo, Guerrero: a) the Acatempo Stela (after monument on display at the Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City); b) shield with spiral and footprints, detail of mural from Zacuala Palace, Teotihuacan (after Séjourné 1959: Plate 28); and c) warrior figure in U-shaped element with twisted roots growing out of cultivated fields motif, Pyramid of the Plumed Serpents, Xochicalco (after Taube 1992:Figure 13f). (Drawings by the author.)

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Acatempo, Guerrero, portrays an armed figure in Teotihuacan military garb standing atop a probable toponymic sign (Figure 5.13a). Although not serpent headed, his spear-thrower is notably similar to the example appearing on the aforementioned Monte Albán column (see Figure 5.11d). The shield on his other arm displays a prominent spiral, a sign that appears with footprints on shields at Teotihuacan (Figure 5.13b). The glyphic element at the base of the monument is a Mexican year sign headdress with twisted roots below, a convention appearing with toponyms at Teotihuacan and Xochicalco (Figure 5.13c; see Taube 2000b:9). The accompanying foliation and flowers may be part of a glyphic sign, although they also continue up the sides of the monument to the figure's headdress. As with the Aztec, flowers were closely identified with warfare and a flowery paradise in Teotihuacan thought (Taube 2005, 2006).

Formerly in the collection of Rufino Tamayo, a stela attributed to Guerrero bears Teotihuacan-style imagery on both its sides (Figures 5.14a–b). One side portrays a goggled figure with the date 3 House, possibly his name, who is grasping a burning torch and a shield and darts. The reverse side features flowers and a spiral containing footprints, probably a version of the sign appearing on Teotihuacan shields. Below the spiral are the

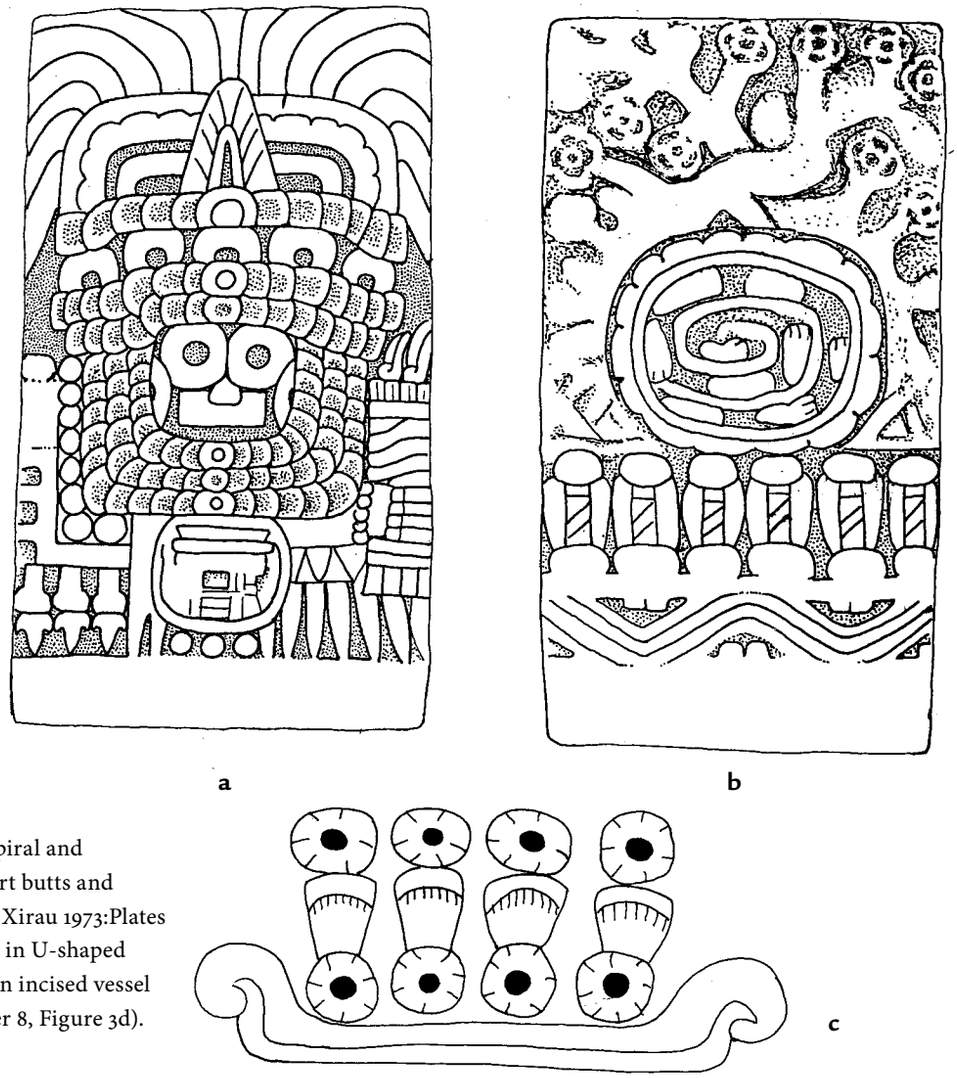

figure 5.14
Two sides of Teotihuacan-style stela in the collection of Rufino Tamayo: a) warrior figure with shield, darts, and burning torch, note date of 3 House on abdomen (after Xirau 1973:Plates 60, 61); b) spiral and footprints motif above six dart butts and diagonal basal element (after Xirau 1973:Plates 60, 61); and c) four dart butts in U-shaped element, detail of Teotihuacan incised vessel (after Winning 1987:2:Chapter 8, Figure 3d). (Drawings by the author.)

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feathered butts of six darts atop an undulating ground line. Two Teotihuacan-style vessels from Teotihuacan and El Mundo Perdido, Tikal, portray canine figures atop similar ground lines (Figures 5.15a–b). As on Stela 4 of Classic period Monte Albán and Postclassic Mixtec codices, the vertical darts may refer to conquest, that is, darts penetrating the earth of enemy territories. However, these elements may also have calendrical significance, as the conventional central Mexican sign for the day Reed is a dart butt. As in the case of Terminal Classic inscriptions from Cotzumalhuapa, the repeated signs might denote a numeral, in this case 6 Reed (see Chinchilla Mazariegos, this volume). One incised Teotihuacan vessel portrays four dart butts within a U-shaped element, perhaps referring to the date 4 Reed (see Figure 5.14c). However, it remains to be seen whether repetitive day signs for dates were indeed used at Teotihuacan.

Two large stela from Tepecuacuilco, Guerrero, feature Teotihuacan-style figures grasping objects. On both monuments, bracelets delineate the hands, which evidently once had fingernails inlaid with another material (Figures 5.16a and 5.17a). On one of the stelae, a figure holds a dripping dart horizontally over the chest (Figure 5.17a). Both the dart point and the feathered butt originally had inlays, and probably a third, larger inlay portrayed

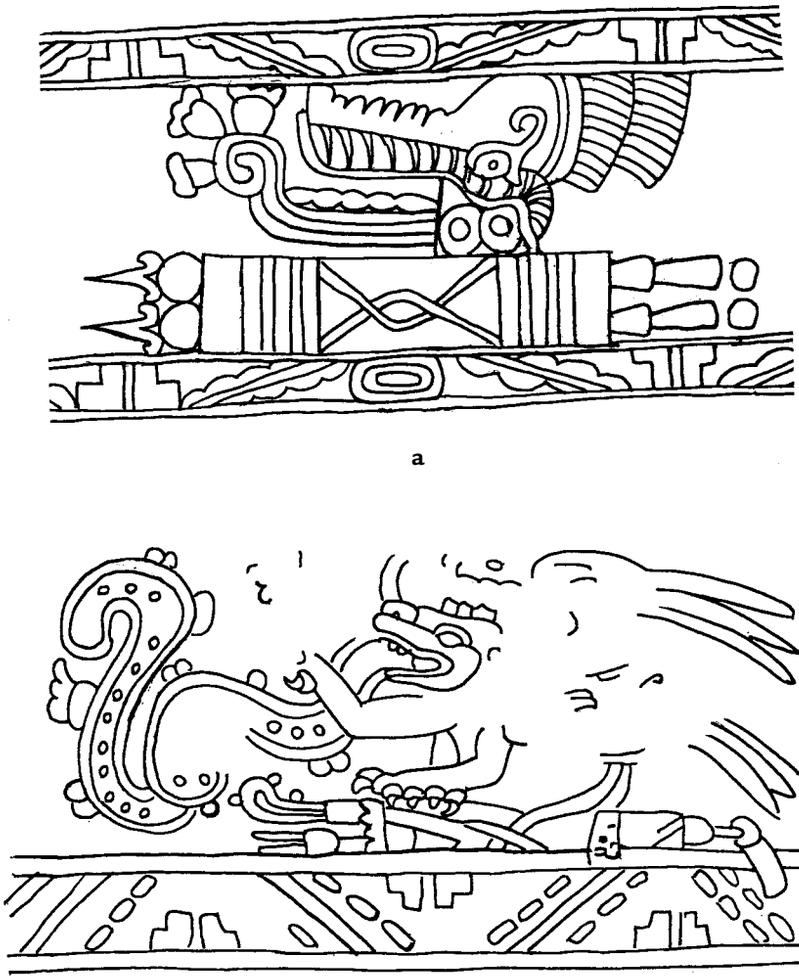

figure 5.15
Early Classic Teotihuacan and Tikal vessel scenes of singing canine figures with weaponry bundle with diagonal basal band motif: a) singing canine head or headdress atop dart bundle, detail of Teotihuacan vase (after Séjourné 1966:Figure 94); b) singing canine figure with weapon bundle, detail of stucco-painted vessel from El Mundo Perdido, Tikal (after Laporte Molina 1989:Figure 75). (Drawings by the author.)

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a circular shield over the chest. Teotihuacan figures often grasp similar darts wrapped in cloth (Figures 5.16b–c). A mural from Atetelco, Teotihuacan, portrays red drops of blood falling from a dart point, and it is likely that the Guerrero stela refers to warfare and conquest (Figure 5.16d). At Building A at Cacaxtla, the Mexican jaguar warrior grasps darts tipped with points of black obsidian bundled in paper or cloth, a convention also known for Early Classic Teotihuacan (see Figures 5.15a–b). As in the case of the Tepecuacuilco stela, the Cacaxtla darts are dripping. Painted blue, the drops probably allude to falling blood as rain (see Matos Moctezuma 1987:95).

The other Tepecuacuilco monument depicts a figure standing atop a U-shaped element serving as a toponymic sign for both Teotihuacan and, later, Xochicalco (see Figure 5.17a). Above this element and between the legs of the figure there is a broad, feathered object with an undulating water band above. Rather than being a loincloth, these elements are probably glyphic signs. A large circular element, probably a shield, covers much of the torso. Although eroded, the widespread Teotihuacan glyph of a schematic Tlaloc face with a quincunx in its mouth occupies the center of this disk. While the object in the left hand is probably a hanging strand of beads, long undulating elements descend from the other hand. These long and narrow objects may be quetzal plumes, as scenes from Early Classic Tikal vessels portray figures grasping bundles of feathers in their hands (Figures 5.17b–c). In ancient Mesoamerica, jade and quetzal plumes were some of the treasured items of conquest and tribute, and figures were commonly shown holding bundles of quetzal plumes and strands of beads (Figures 5.17d–e). Whereas one of the Tepecuacuilco stela shows a figure grasping a dripping dart as a portrayal of conquest, the other figure appears to be grasping items of wealth, although we cannot tell whether these items reference tribute, commerce, or simply abundance.

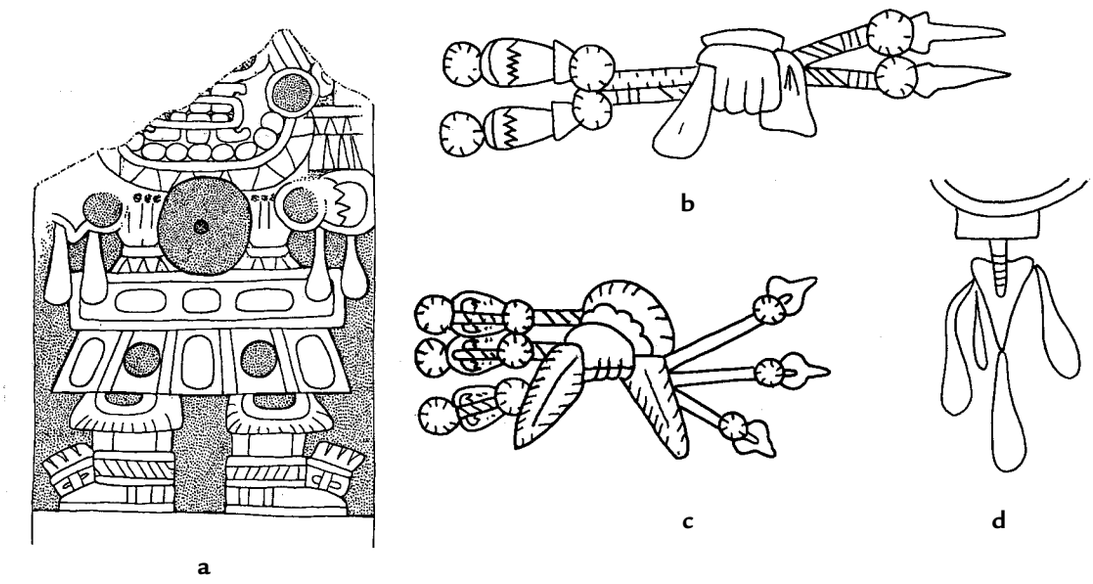

figure 5.16
Stela 1, Tepecuacuilco, Guerrero: a) Tepecuacuilco stela portraying figure holding dripping dart (after monument on display at the Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City); b) hand holding cloth with pair of dots, detail of mural from Tepantitla, Teotihuacan (after Miller 1973:Figure 193); c) hand holding cloth and darts, detail of mural from White Patio, Atetelco (after Winning 1987:1:Chapter 7); and d) dart dripping blood, detail of mural from Atetelco (after Cabrera Castro 1995:Plate 56). (Drawings by the author.)

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A tabular Teotihuacan-style stela attributed to Guerrero in the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City portrays a complex scene of frontally facing anthropomorphic imagery (Figure 5.18a). Curiously, there are two pairs of feet with tasseled sandals marked with the same stepped motif. On close inspection, it is evident that there are two distinct carving styles present, one shallower and simpler at the uppermost edge and another on the carved lower third of the monument. This stela was likely recarved from a larger broken monument, with the upper central portion being a more recent addition to the remaining lower portion of the original larger standing figure. The identical sandals suggest that the recarved region might be an "abbreviated" version of the

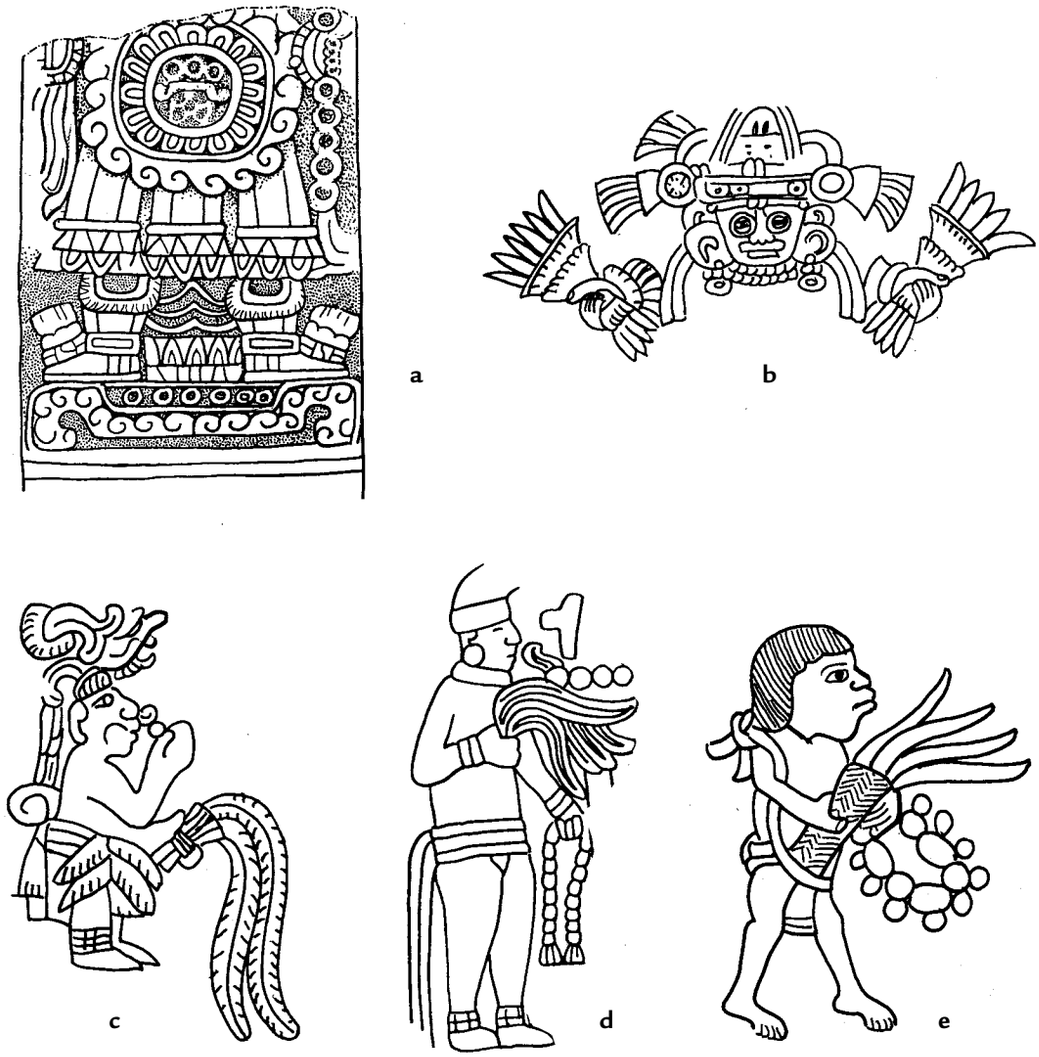

figure 5.17

Stela 2, Tepecuacuilco, Guerrero: a) Tepecuacuilco stela showing figure grasping strand of beads and possible quetzal plumes (after monument on display at the Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City); b) Teotihuacan figure grasping bundles of quetzal plumes, detail of Early Classic vessel from Tikal (after Culbert 1993:Figure 15d); c) Maya figure with bundle of quetzal plumes, detail of Early Classic plan-relief vessel from Tikal (after Culbert 1993:Figure 128a); d) figure grasping quetzal plumes and strand of beads, detail of scene from Mound of the Building Columns, El Tajín (after Koontz 2009:Figure 4.7); and e) Aztec portrayal of booty or tribute, with figure carrying jade and gold necklace and quetzal plume bundle, Codex Telleriano-Remensis, folio 33v. (Drawings by the author.)

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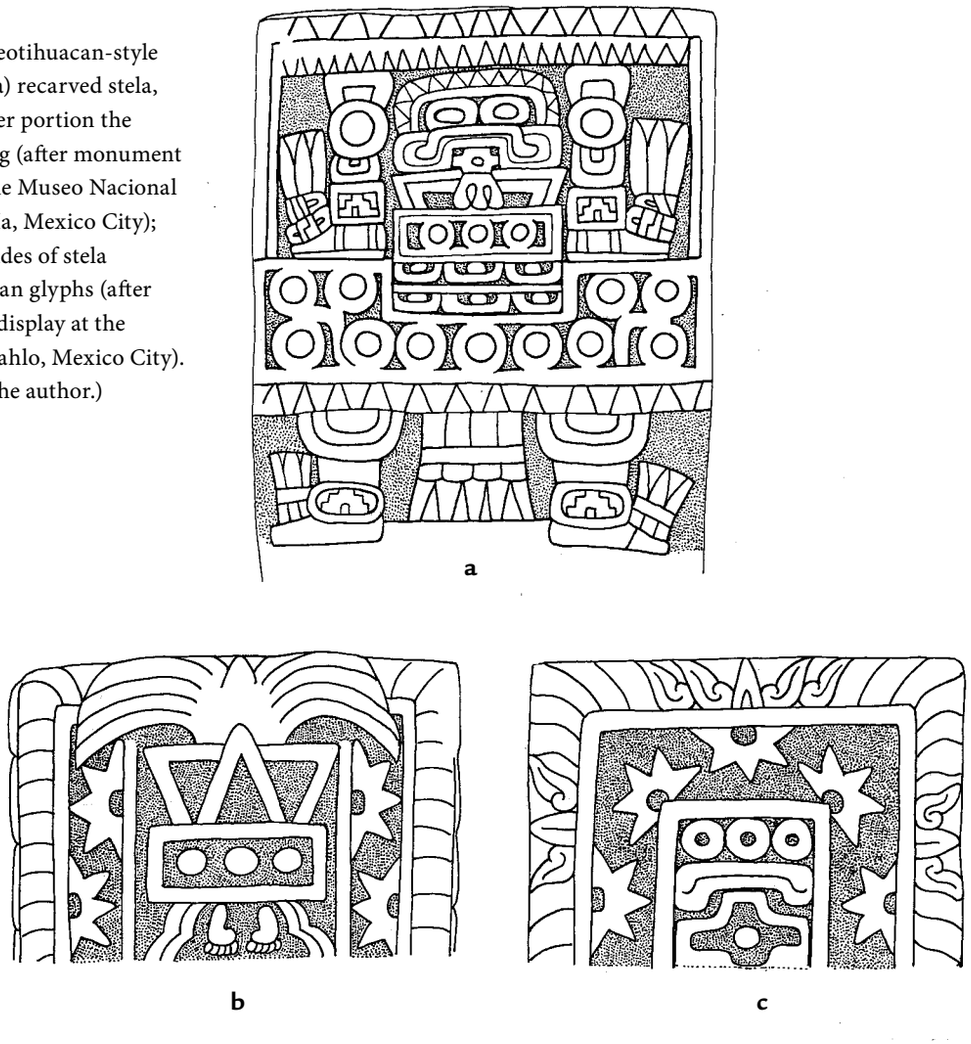

figure 5.18
Early Classic Teotihuacan-style tabular stelae: a) recarved stela, legs on the lower portion the original carving (after monument on display at the Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City); and b–c) two sides of stela with Teotihuacan glyphs (after monument on display at the Museo Frida Kahlo, Mexico City). (Drawings by the author.)

original sculpture: a Tlaloc face with a quincunx mouth flanked by ear spools and the feet appropriately placed below. However, the arms and upper legs are entirely lacking, and a year sign headdress appears in the central region of the torso. In addition, the entire composition is atop a bowl with the inverted rim sign marked by probable jade disks, an element lacking for the larger figure below. The center of the bowl contains eyes, a common convention at Teotihuacan denoting water. In placement and form, it is quite similar to the basal sign from the Tepecuacuilco stela portraying the figure with the Tlaloc disk and quincunx mouth in the center of its body (see Figure 5.17a). In this case, the bowl with inverted rim depicts cloud scrolls and contains jade disks in its interior.

Conventions of Teotihuacan Writing and Monumental Inscriptions

The recarved monument vividly exemplifies a very common process of Teotihuacan writing, that of *pars pro toto*, where select elements are abbreviated versions of larger and more elaborate images, such as a single tassel serving for the entire tasseled headdress (see Millon 1988:Figure V.2). Thus, what may have been an original Tlaloc figure is reduced to a frontally facing Tlaloc head, ear spools, tasseled sandals, and a year sign headdress; aside from the ear spool element, all are now documented as distinct signs appearing in Teotihuacan-style texts (e.g., Figures 5.19b–c). Two aforementioned Teotihuacan-style vessels probably constitute a

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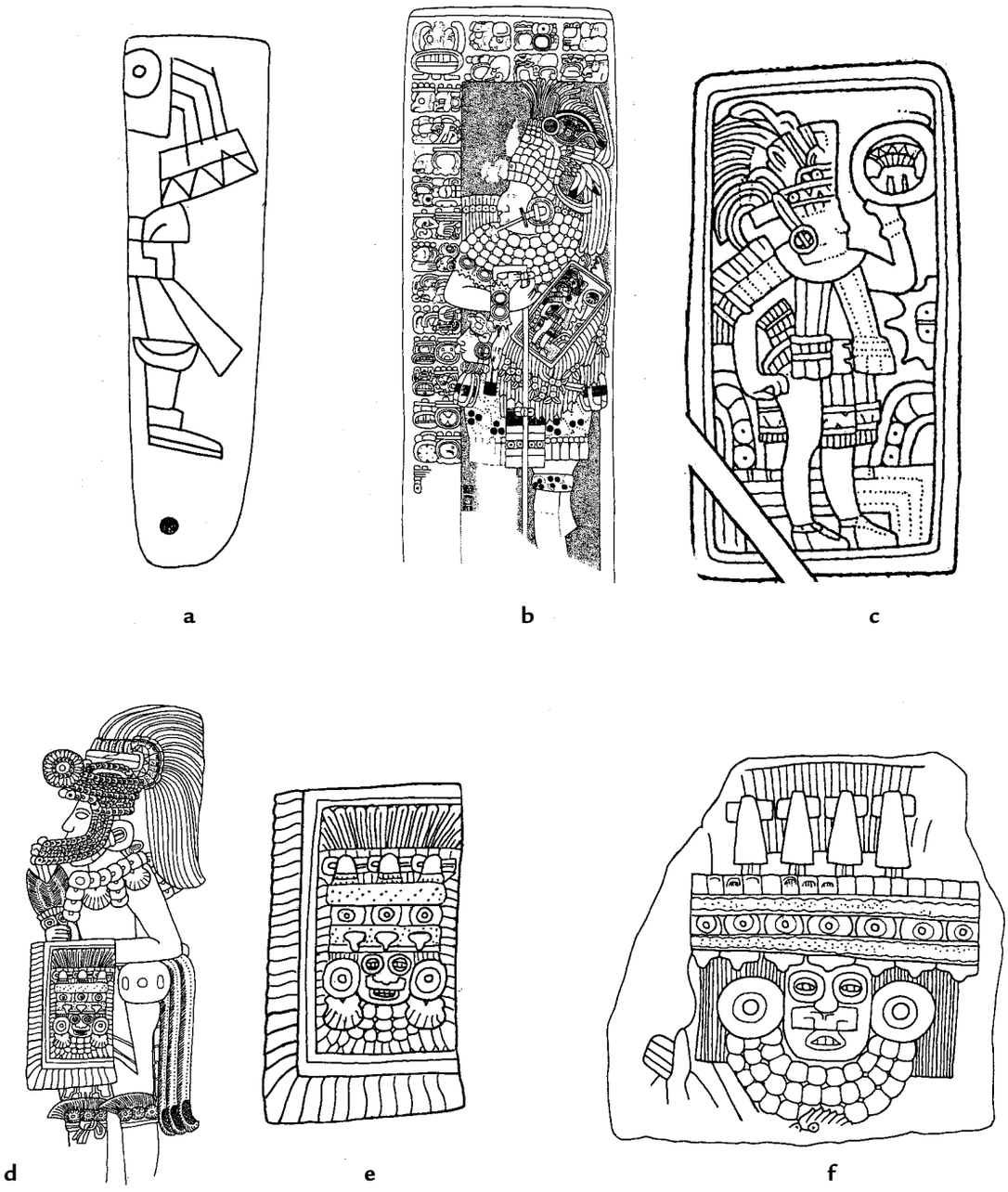

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figure 5.19

Teotihuacan-style stelae and shields: a) portion of large jade celt with remnants of standing Teotihuacan-style figure (drawing by the author, after object on display at the Museo del Jade Marco Fidel Tristán Castro, San José, Costa Rica); b) Early Classic stela from Kuna-Lacanha, Chiapas (drawing by and courtesy of Simon Martin); c) detail of shield held by figure on Kuna-Lacanha stela; d) Nun Yax Ayiin dressed as Teotihuacan warrior with spear-thrower and shield, Tikal Stela 31 (drawing by the author, after Jones and Satterthwaite 1982:Figure 32a); e) detail of shield held by Nun Yax Ayiin (drawing by the author); and f) Tikal Stela 32, note probable spear-thrower held in raised right hand (drawing by the author, after Jones and Satterthwaite 1982:Figure 55a).

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similar example (see Figures 5.15a–b). Whereas a vase from Tikal portrays an entire singing canine figure atop a weapon bundle, another from Teotihuacan has only a singing canine headdress atop a dart bundle. Possibly, many emblematic Teotihuacan signs are the disparate, irreducible components of larger and more complex scenes, such as richly dressed full figures appearing with toponyms or engaged in particular acts. Such elements, often still further simplified, form the signs of Teotihuacan writing. Such signs nonetheless often relate to the underlying "grammar" of a larger corporal image, such as temple roofs serving as the symbolic "headdresses" of glyphic signs. In the aforementioned Teotihuacan-style monument from Veracruz (see Figure 5.4d), we can readily see how this scene could be further simplified by portraying only the head of the plumed serpent below the headdress.

Another basic characteristic of Teotihuacan writing is symmetry, with vertically oriented texts appearing on centerlines, whether in the middle of tabular stelae or the bodies of frontally facing figures (see Figures 5.2a–d, 5.3b–c, 5.5b, 5.13a, 5.14a, 5.17a, and 5.18a). Although this is not common in Late Preclassic and Classic period Maya writing, it is among the ancient Zapotec and appears as early as the Middle Formative *danzante* sculptures at Monte Albán (see Scott 1978:D-55, D-59, E-1, M-4) as well as on Late Preclassic and Classic Zapotec ceramic urns (see Caso and Bernal 1952:78–83, 204, 251, 278, 284, 337). An especially impressive example of Teotihuacan monumental carving is the great unfinished figure from Coatlinchan currently at the entrance of the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City (see Pohl and Robinson 2005:124). A series of large glyphic signs are shallowly pecked on the figure's belt and loincloth, including two circular cartouches and a possible coefficient of ten. Their careful orientation along the center line of the body suggests that rather than being random graffiti incised when the monument was lying face up, they are probably preliminary carvings to delineate the form and placement of the text. As a finished sculpture without the large quarry curb on its back, this monument would still have weighed an estimated 125 metric tons (Heizer and Williams 1965:55), making it the largest monument in Mesoamerica that was intended to be textually inscribed.

James Porter (1996) noted that for the Olmec and Classic Maya, stelae tend to be strongly celtiform, a tradition that probably relates to incised greenstone celts. A large recarved jadeite celt in the collection of the Museo del Jade Marco Fidel Tristán Castro in San José, Costa Rica, portrays a standing figure incised in the Teotihuacan style (Figure 5.19a). However, this is a unique example, and incised celts and celtiform stelae are unknown at Teotihuacan. Instead, Teotihuacan-style stelae tend to be thin and tabular and resemble rectangular shields. A probable stela in the Museo Frida Kahlo in Mexico City is portrayed with feathered edging, much as if it were a shield (Figures 5.18b–c).[5] On one side, the edging also has flames, elements that often appear on Teotihuacan weapons and warriors. An Early Classic stela from Kuna-Lacanha, Chiapas, portrays a figure dressed in Teotihuacan-style military garb holding a richly ornamented shield (see Figures 5.19b–c). The figure holds a circular glyphic cartouche while standing before a probable toponymic sign. The shield strongly suggests a tabular Teotihuacan-style stela as well as Teotihuacan-style tecalli sculptures, such as the Axtapalulca Plaque, which has pendant tassels at the sides, much as if it were a small shield rendered in stone (see Figure 5.3b). Aside from the Kuna-Lacanha example, the Teotihuacan-style shield carried by the Maya ruler Nun Yax Ayiin from the side of Tikal Stela 31 (Figures 5.19d–e) is notably similar to the Teotihuacan-style image appearing on Tikal Stela 32 (Figure 5.19f). Both feature frontally facing figures wearing tasseled headdresses, nose bars, goggles, large ear spools, and thick necklaces formed of three strands of large beads. For the Late Classic Maya, perhaps the clearest example of a shield rendered monumentally in stone is Stairway Block 2 from Structure 10L-16 at Copan, which is a massive solar shield containing the dancing image of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' in its interior (see Taube 2004:Figure 13.13a). It is surely no coincidence that this Early Classic ruler, the

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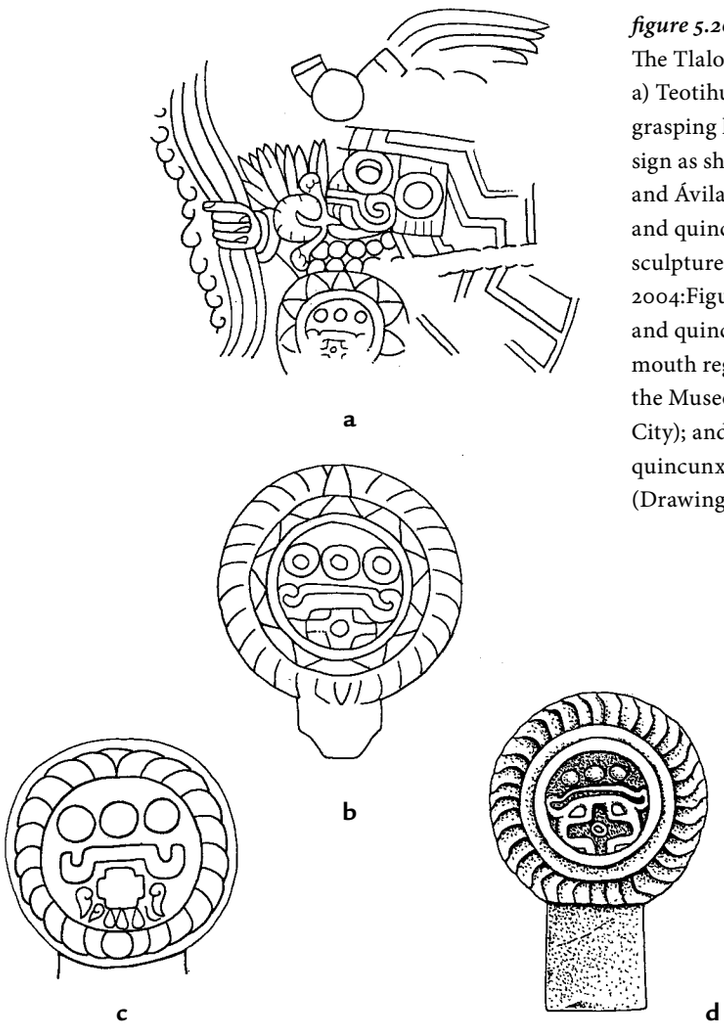

figure 5.20
The Tlaloc and quincunx sign at Teotihuacan: a) Teotihuacan mural portraying Tlaloc grasping lightning bolt and Tlaloc quincunx sign as shield, Totometla (after Juárez Osnaya and Ávila Rivera 1995:Plate 14); b) Tlaloc and quincunx sign appearing on tecalli sculpture (after Sugiyama and Cabrera Castro 2004:Figure 151); c) stone sculpture of Tlaloc and quincunx sign with drops and flames in mouth region (after monument on display at the Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City); and d) ceramic *almena* with Tlaloc and quincunx sign (after Seler 1902–1923:440). (Drawings by the author.)

founder of the Copan dynasty, had strong cultural ties to Teotihuacan. The entire stairway block is an emblematic glyph.

Circular as well as rectangular shields are common in the iconography of Teotihuacan. Many Teotihuacan-style monuments are in the form of circular cartouches rimmed with feathers, and as in the case of many tabular stelae, such monuments probably also allude to shields. For example, the uppermost portion of the aforementioned marcador from El Mundo Perdido at Tikal is a feather-rimmed disk bearing Teotihuacan glyphs on both sides: one side features the name of the historical figure Spear-Thrower Owl, while the other sided features a stylized Tlaloc face (see Figures 5.10b–c). The same glyphs appear in the accompanying Maya text below describing the dedication of the monument (see Figure 5.10d).

One of the most common glyphic signs occurring on Teotihuacan monumental disks is a frontally facing Tlaloc head, often with a quincunx in its mouth (Figures 5.20b–d). Three circles of identical size denote the eyes and nose, and although missing the quincunx, the Tlaloc glyphs from the Tikal marcador are probably versions of this sign (see Figures 5.10c–d). In addition, this glyph appears in other contexts in Teotihuacan and later Xochicalco writing, including within a large, petaled disk in the central torso region of one of the Tepecuacuilco stelae (Figure 5.20a; see

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figure 5.21

Comparison of glyph of Teotihuacan Tlaloc with quincunx and creatures devouring hearts: a) Teotihuacan Tlaloc with quincunx before mouth, Plaza de los Glifos, Teotihuacan (after Cabrera Castro 1996:33); b–c) glyphic signs of jaguars devouring hearts, Plaza de los Glifos (after Cabrera Castro 1996:33); d) glyph of jaguar devouring heart, Tepantitla (after Taube 2000b:Figure 23a); e) plumed serpent devouring heart, detail of stucco-painted vessel (after Séjourné 1959:Figure 132); and f) jaguar devouring heart, detail of stucco-painted vessel (after Séjourné 1959:Figure 133). (Drawings by the author.)

Figure 5.17a). This device quite likely denotes a shield. Murals from the Totometla compound at Teotihuacan portray Tlaloc figures armed with lightning bolts and circular shields with the same sign over their torsos (Figure 5.20a). Portrayals of Tlaloc as a warlike being with lightning bolts and circular shields continue to the sixteenth century (see Codex Ixtlilxochitl, f. 11v). In addition, James Langley (1992:257) notes Tlaloc faces on contact period shields and shield standards, including examples from the *Primeros memoriales* and the Lienzo de Tlaxcala.

The ubiquity and prominence of images of Tlaloc with a quincunx in his mouth warrants a discussion as to their meaning. In Mesoamerica, the quincunx commonly signifies the cosmos, the four corners of the world and the central *axis mundi*. In central Mexico, this quincunx model for the world closely relates to Tlaloc. Located on the central axis of the Pyramid of the Moon,

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Burial 2 contained five Tlaloc water jars, four at the corners and one in the center of the pit (see Sugiyama and Cabrera Castro 2004:23). For the Late Postclassic period, this same arrangement appears on page 69 of the Vaticanus B and pages 27 and 28 of the Codex Borgia, here with the four Tlalocs at the corners of the scenes referring to the four world directions. But if Tlaloc is identified with the world quincunx, why is this sign in his mouth? Although it is conceivable that the sign may refer to speech, the quincunx is rarely affixed to Teotihuacan speech scrolls. In the Plaza de los Glifos at La Ventilla, one of the signs shows the head of Tlaloc with the quincunx before his mouth (Figure 5.21a). Similarly, other signs from the Plaza de los Glifos have hearts in front of jaguar mouths, a glyph also appearing at Tepantitla (Figures 5.21b–d). Clearly, these glyphs depict jaguars eating hearts, a common convention in Teotihuacan art, where eagles and plumed serpents also have blood-dripping hearts before their mouths to denote them as devourers of sacrifice (Figures 5.21e–f).[6]

Clara Millon (1988:119) noted that a Tlaloc glyph from Techinantitla has drops of blood falling from the mouth, probably denoting "the consumption of a blood sacrifice." In one example of the Teotihuacan Tlaloc and quincunx sign, drops fall from the quincunx, much as if it were also being devoured (see Figure 5.20c). This is also graphically portrayed on the aforementioned recarved stela, with three drops below the quincunx in Tlaloc's mouth, recalling the blood falling from devoured hearts (see Figures 5.18a and 5.21e–f). In Classic Maya writing, particular signs are placed in mouths to signify acts of consumption, such as a tamale to denote eating or the Imix water sign to denote drinking. Moreover, the *winik* glyph for person can appear in the mouths of jaguars, bats, and vultures to mark them as eaters of humans (see Houston et al. 2006:Figure 3.5). Given the cosmic significance of the quincunx sign, its appearance in the mouth of Tlaloc may denote this being as the world devourer and, in a political context, the Teotihuacan state as the taker of territory. As Millon (1973:306) noted, "The 'Rain God' had fangs, and armed men went abroad in his service." Referring to this and other Tlaloc signs, Langley (1992:257) argued that this being "was the patron of warriors who fought under his insignia." The Tlaloc and quincunx sign may denote the Teotihuacan polity and its territorial domain. In this regard, we should note that the sign can be surrounded by water, recalling the Late Postclassic concept of Anahuac, the world as a disk surrounded by the sea (see Figure 5.18a).

The placement of explicit circular shields with darts atop torsos is common in the iconography of Teotihuacan, including the Owl and Weapons sign first discussed by Winning (1948). Remember that day names in circular cartouches commonly appear on the torsos of Teotihuacan figures. At times, they appear as single large cartouches rimmed with feathers, and although they overlap visually and conceptually with flowers and circular mirrors, they probably represent shields (see Figures 5.4b and 5.5a). In the case of the aforementioned graffito from La Ventilla, the date 3 Reptile's Eye appears before the human figure as if it were a shield, with the figure perhaps holding it in his outstretched hand (see Figure 5.3a). Quite possibly, the circular cartouches of day names allude to shields at Teotihuacan, many of which bear feathered rims. Although it may seem strange that day names could be linked to the ideology of war, page 1 of the Late Postclassic codex Fejérváry-Mayer portrays the fire god Xiuhtecuhtli as an armed warrior in the center of the 260-day calendar, with the bleeding, dismembered corpse of Tezcatlipoca cast to the four corners of the cosmos. Similarly, the Late Preclassic and Classic period Maya day names are framed by a circular cartouche with three pendant elements denoting blood, much as if they were severed heads (see Houston et al. 2006:93, Figures 2.37, 2.38).

Conclusions

As with the great city itself, the writing system of Teotihuacan appears virtually ex nihilo, with no clear precursors in the Valley of Mexico. Certain signs and conventions, such as particular day

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names and the placement of coefficients, likely derived from the precocious writing system of the Zapotec. One trait clearly shared with the Zapotec is the portrayal of glyphs in the center line of the monument, a convention that also relates to the central axis of the human body. In contrast to Maya stelae and texts rendered in profile, Teotihuacan figures and their accompanying texts face the viewer head on, perhaps as a statement of aggression and domination. Perhaps the most illustrative example of this convention is the broken Stela 32 of Tikal, the monument most similar to the canonical conventions of Teotihuacan at the site (see Figure 5.19f). Although eroded, the figure most likely holds a spear-thrower upright in his right hand, an obvious act of aggression that can also be seen in the famed, roughly contemporaneous plan-relief vessel from the same site featuring a group of armed teotihuacanos proceeding to a temple occupied by Maya (see Culbert 1993:Figure 128a). The leading Teotihuacan warrior holds his spear-thrower up to the face of a Maya figure holding quetzal plumes as a probable offering of tribute (see Figure 5.17c). Thanks to the epigraphic work on the Tikal entrada pioneered by Tatiana Proskouriakoff (1993) and later pursued and developed by David Stuart (2000), there is increasing evidence that a form of Teotihuacan military incursion did occur in the Peten during the fourth century AD. Thanks to the presence of an essentially deciphered writing system among the Maya, we can speak with increasing confidence of a Teotihuacan entrada in this area, but what of Early Classic Guerrero? The Acatempo stela portrays a frontally facing warrior figure again showing a spear-thrower aggressively to the viewer, and in comparison to those of the Early Classic Maya, the Teotihuacan-style stelae of Guerrero suggest at least as powerful a foreign military presence (see Figure 5.13).

In contrast to those of the Classic Zapotec and Maya, the Teotihuacan writing system did not gradually develop out of the Formative period. Instead, it emerged along with the explosive growth of the city and therefore may closely reflect certain aspects of Teotihuacan society. For example, the regimented presentation of identically appearing individuals marked with specific name glyphs is well suited for military organization as well as purposes of tribute and taxation. Moreover, the appearance of figures and glyphs within grids surely also relates to the remarkable layout of the city with its roughly two thousand apartment compounds. The theme of Teotihuacan monuments tends to be strongly militaristic, with many of them in the form of round or rectangular shields, and I have also suggested that even the circular cartouches of Teotihuacan day names may allude to shields. The occurrence of monuments in pure Teotihuacan style in such far-flung regions of Mesoamerica as Guerrero, the Gulf Coast, coastal Chiapas, and the Peten of Guatemala has intense political and historical significance, as these monuments indicate the presence and perhaps even the dominance of Teotihuacan in these regions. In many cases, these monuments in distant regions are overtly militaristic and portray figures wielding shields and weapons, much as if they are markers of conquest and territory. If there ever were an imperial writing system in Classic period Mesoamerica, it surely would be that of Teotihuacan.

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NOTES

1 By Aztec, I am referring not only to the Culhua-Mexica of Tenochtitlan, but also the other Nahuatl-speaking peoples of the Triple Alliance, the Alcolhua of Tetzcoco and the Tepanecs of Azcapotzalco.

2 For the purposes of this study, central Mexico will refer to the Valley of Mexico and also adjacent regions in the states of Mexico, Morelos, Puebla, Tlaxcala, and Hidalgo. Central Mexico is used in contrast to the more inclusive term highland Mexico, which also incorporates the Ñuiñe and Zapotec writing systems of Oaxaca.

3 In the case of the aforementioned Teotihuacan stela attributed to Veracruz, the figure has the temple roof sign at the top of his headdress, above a pair of hands grasping burning torches (see Figure 5.4d). The compound may refer to the ritual office of the figure, who also holds torches in his hands.

4 Now lost, the original manuscript probably had small glyphic names labeling each of the nobles. The two extant versions were copied from the original in the seventeenth century, when Nahuatl script was no longer employed. Although glyphic toponyms do appear in both copies, personal names do not.

5 Since the lower portion of the monument is set in concrete, it is difficult to ascertain if it is the upper fragment of a once larger stela.

6 A clear example of an eagle eating a heart appears as a Teotihuacan-style cartouche atop the headdress held up by Siyaj Chan K'awiil on Tikal Stela 31 (see Jones and Satterthwaite 1982:Figure 51d).

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